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MERV

THE QUEEN OF THE WORLD;

AND THE

SCOURGE OF THE MAN-STEALING TURCOMANS.

WITH

AN EXPOSITION OF THE KHORASSAN QUESTION.

BY

CHARLES MARVIN,

AUTHOR OF

"THE DISASTROUS RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE AKHAL TEKKE TURCOMANS,"
GRODEKOFF'S RIDE TO HERAT," "OUR PUBLIC OFFICES," ETC.

"It is pretty certain that the Russian and British frontiers in Central Asia will some day meet. Where they will meet depends upon ourselves. If we do not wish our rival to overstep a certain line, we must ourselves advance to that line."—MACKENZIE WALLACE.

LONDON:
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1881.

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TO

ENGLAND'S WARMEST

AND

MOST DISINTERESTED SUPPORTER

IN HER RIVALRY WITH RUSSIA,

ARMINIUS VÁMBÉRY,

THIS WORK

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

A REASON why we have few comprehensive compilations dealing with current political questions is, I imagine, the small thanks and smaller profit the compiler receives for his trouble. Another, perhaps, is that it is much easier for a writer to "read up" a subject (aided by Stokes' excellent system of memory, if you will), and "knock off" light, superficial sketches, replete with opinion but barren of fact, than to set himself down to the drudgery of preparing an artistic compilation. The result of these two circumstances is, that while during the last seven years we have had innumerable articles on the Merv Question, nothing has, as yet, appeared in the form of a book that would give the general reader, or even the professional politician, a comprehensive idea of the subject.

Theoretically, every writer who pretends to an authoritative opinion on a subject should be well read up in it. As a matter of fact, however, journalists and politicians have too many subjects

and too little leisure to make themselves thorough masters of every political topic. The present work, compiled originally for the guidance of the author in forming his own individual opinion, may serve a similar purpose with others; and save many a wasted hour in study and research. The book may be accepted as containing the greater part, if not, indeed, the whole of the matter a writer would hunt for in reading up the Merv Question.

It further contains a deal of Russian information not yet placed before the English public; including three valuable articles on the Turcomans, by the late Major-General Petroosevitch, Governor of Krasnovodsk, entitled, "The Turcomans between the old bed of the Oxus and the North Persian Frontier," "The North-East Provinces of Khorassan," and "The South-East Littoral of the Caspian, and Roads thence to Merv," (in all 214 pages,) published at Tiflis in 1880. I have appended a facsimile of the map published by Petroosevitch with his book.

Except in my translation of the above articles, I have avoided condensation as much as possible, in order to avoid errors and misconceptions. Every fact stands in the light the original author would wish it to do, and, my own opinions being chiefly relegated to the end of the volume, I ought to escape the imputation of "garbling" and "colouring" facts

that is so frequently made—too often too justly—against political writers. Holding strongly to the opinion that what one writer has well described it is a waste of time for another to describe again, I have let the travellers among the Turcomans tell their story of the country and its people in their own words, adopting the "mosaic" treatment employed in the *Eye-witnesses' Account of the Disastrous Russian Campaign against the Akhal Tekke Turcomans.*

I have adopted no regular system of spelling proper names; following as closely as possible the prevailing practice. As no two travellers spell Persian and Turcoman names alike, I trust to be excused if verbal differences have anywhere escaped my notice.

Finally, I must not omit to express my thanks to my wife, without whose affectionate assistance this work could scarcely have been written.

Charlton, Kent,
Feb. 1881.

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CHAPTER I.

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"There must surely be some strange attraction in the wild freedom of the desert, to atone for the filthy uncleanliness, physical and moral, of the wandering tribes. M. Vámbéry revels in the dirty rags of the Dervish, Major Abbott is at home in the foul atmosphere of a Turcoman tent, and even the gentle, refined Arthur Conolly quits with regret the society of those unwashed savages."—JAMES HUTTON.

IT is a remarkable circumstance that, in spite of the immense interest displayed by England during the

last twelve years in the operations of Russia beyond the Caspian, little or nothing should have been done to obtain information about the Turcoman tribes, and, above all, of the Tekkes and their head *aoul* at Merv. To gain any idea from English data of the "Queen of the World" — Mervi-Shah-Djihan — as the ruined city was once proudly called, one has to go back full forty years, when a succession of English travellers passed through the oasis, on their way to Central Asia or from it. Our whole stock of direct knowledge of Merv gathers round the epoch of 1830–40, and although in 1878 Major Butler is said to have penetrated to within 40 miles of the Tekke capital, the information he has disclosed has added nothing to what we knew before. Colonel Valentine Baker, indeed, a traveller among the Turcomans five years earlier than Major Francis Butler, has told us more about Merv than his successor; but in neither case do we obtain that enlightenment which we derive from the writings of Colonel Kostenko, Colonel Grodekoff, and Major-General Petroosevitch—three of the brightest ornaments of the Russian general staff. All five travellers, however, suffer from this disadvantage, that none have entered Merv; and their information, consequently, has the drawback of being wholly derived from hearsay.

Excluding the explorations of Captain Bruce, Captain Elton, Captain Woodruffe, and other Englishmen who laid the foundation of Russia's influence in the Caspian in the second quarter of the eighteenth century (1723–1741), and also the experiences of Evrenkoff, a Russian non-commissioned officer, who penetrated to Merv in 1789, we may broadly say that

our acquaintance with the Turcomans practically commences with the journey of James Baillie Fraser into Khorassan in 1821. It is true that two years earlier Captain Mouravieff, afterwards the conqueror of Kars, landed on the east Caspian coast and proceeded to Khiva, but neither the French translation of his travels nor his mission attracted much attention at the time, and have totally slipped the public memory since. Quite a different fate attended the bulky quarto in which Baillie Fraser enshrined the results of his long and dangerous travels. The work is large, the style — verbose and heavy. Yet, although 60 years have elapsed since the Scotchman traversed Persia and swallowed *pilaf* in Goklan tents, his quarto still occupies an honourable niche in a library, and serves as a standard work of reference with writers on Central Asia.

Baillie Fraser embarked at Bombay in 1821, after having travelled over a large portion of the north and western provinces of India. Landing later on at Bushire, in the Persian Gulf, he proceeded thence to Teheran and Meshed, with the object of penetrating to Bokhara and the Khanates of Central Asia. Finding the country too disturbed to enable him to carry out his design, he turned back from Meshed through the Kurdish provinces of Khorassan, and traversed in succession the districts of the Goorgan, Atrek, Astrabad and Resht. The information he collected was of the most valuable character, and one can only regret that his verbosity should have prevented him becoming a favourite with the reading public. It is not too much to say that his *Journey into Khorassan*, and his many other corpulent works of travel, might

have easily been boiled down to a single volume of decent proportions, such as, for instance, Burnes' *Bokhara*, simple and unpretentious in style, but pregnant with matter for the statesman and the student.

Quite different in this respect was the *Overland Journey to India* of Lieutenant Arthur Conolly, written in 1830. A buoyant and graphic writer, the account he gives of his perilous adventures among the Atrek Turcomans is full of force and interest, the latter element, indeed, being enhanced to a melancholy degree by the subsequent tragic fate of the narrator, who was cruelly murdered with Colonel Stoddart by the sanguinary Emir Nasrullah of Bokhara in 1842. Leaving London in August 1829, eight years after Fraser commenced his journey, and four years later than the unsuccessful attempt of Lieutenant Berg (afterwards Field Marshal Berg, of Polish infamy), to penetrate to Khiva from Mangishlak, Conolly proceeded by sea to St. Petersburg, and travelled thence to Astrabad, *viâ* Tiflis and Teheran. There, in the hope of penetrating to Khiva, he assumed the guise of a native merchant, and providing himself with scarves, shawls, and furs, set out on the 26th of April, 1830, for the Turcoman desert. The little caravan to which he attached himself succeeded in reaching Cheen Mahomed, almost midway between Krasnovodsk and Kizil Arvat, where the traveller was seized by some treacherous nomads, and plundered of his property. For days his life hung in a balance. The Turcomans hesitated between murdering him and selling him into bondage. At length, intertribal and personal jealousies procured his release, and he succeeded

in making his way back to Astrabad (May 22nd), whence he proceeded to India, *viâ* Meshed, Herat, and Candahar.

It is curious to contrast the bright and lively narrative of Conolly—who, in every sense of the word, was a Christian gentleman, and died at Bokhara a martyr to the faith—with the wonderful, eccentric writings of the Hebrew missionary Wolff. Wolff was a Bavarian Jew, who early embraced Christianity, and travelled all over the world, preaching the Gospel to the scattered members of his race. The adventures he records are of the most extraordinary description, and if they somewhat strain at times the reader's faith in the writer, he cannot but read on, fascinated by Wolff's eccentric diction and his curious views of every conceivable person and subject.

Wolff was a sort of Boswell to himself, and a most indiscreet describer of all who came in contact with him. The frankness with which he wrote of the many eminent men and women he met with on his travels, is only surpassed by the astounding disregard he had for the paint and powder which every individual, more or less, carefully uses to conceal the defects of his mind or body from inquisitive neighbours. We read little of the displays of bodily strength and courage which crowd the pages of the conventional traveller's note-book, but encounter repeatedly such confessions as this:—"In crossing the Oxus, Wolff went in a boat, which made him feel very nervous, so that he screamed out, upon which the Tadjiks put their hands over his eyes, that he might not see the river." In another place he tells us, using the third person in his narrative, as usual, that "Wolff often

went through the deserts of Bokhara with his mind occupied with thoughts of the friends of his youth, his jokes and pranks, &c. . . . and as Wolff thought of these things he would say aloud, 'No, no, no, no,' and laugh heartily; so much so that the Turcomans would laugh with him, and ask, 'With whom were you talking?' when Wolff would tell them that he was thinking about his friends in Europe. And should Wolff go out on his missionary travels again, he will think, amongst other things, how he once said to Archdeacon Denison, 'When I thrashed that fellow, I used my fist, and tore out all his hair'; and Denison replied, 'Do you call that using your fist, when you tear out the hair?' and Wolff will also think that when at Ecclesfield, dictating his book to Mrs. Gatty, he made some uncharitable remark between the sentences, and she said, 'Where is your charity gone?' to which he coolly answered, 'Into the first volume, and I have none to spare now, as I have to write a second volume.' And he will think, too, of his friend Templeman, and how he called Templeman 'a fascinating bachelor,' &c. and Dr. Wolff will also think of the church, parsonage, and schools which he has built at Ile Brewers. People who sit at home at ease may take Wolff's assurance that those who have not cheerful spirits cannot undergo the toils and fatigues which he has done. And as he has been reproached for calling people 'jackasses' and 'scoundrels,' he will confess that he is ready to shake hands any day with the jackasses. As to the scoundrels, those who have got that title have richly deserved it."

Yet this garrulous old man, whose mind was filled with crazy notions of the Millennium, the Lost Ten

Tribes, and the existence of evil spirits, who clawed every clergyman he came in contact with, and missionaries in particular, who was frightened to mount a horse, and was lame in one ankle, who screamed whenever he crossed a puddle, and could not cook the simplest food for himself, trudged bravely on foot for years through Central Asia, Afghanistan, and India; at a period, too, when every native state was directed by its own devil in human form, and when every Asiatic highway had more cut-throats upon it than mile-stones. In 1845, the anxiety of the English public to ascertain the fate of our two envoys, Conolly and Stoddart, was intense. It was known that both were in the hands of the cruellest scoundrel that ever filled the Emir's throne at Bokhara, and the belief was common that both had met their death by murder. The miscreant ruler was too far removed from India for a column to set out to avenge the insult Nasrullah had offered England by the seizure of her envoys, and the disasters in Afghanistan had so largely lowered her prestige in the East, that not one of her fire-eating travellers would venture forth, even in disguise, to elicit the fate of the two unhappy Englishmen. In the midst of the national expectancy, Joseph Wolff emerged from his pleasant retreat at Ile Brewers, and declared himself ready to sacrifice the ease his age demanded, and proceed to Central Asia to clear up the mystery.

Ferrier, who disliked him, ascribes the offer to vanity, but I take it to be more probable that the restlessness engendered by eighteen years of wandering, and a natural spirit of self-sacrifice, were at the

bottom of the undertaking. Unprovided with weapons of any kind, and anomalously dressed in a clergyman's gown, doctor's hood, and shovel hat, the missionary set off, with a Bible under his arm, for the Khanate of Bokhara; openly avowing his mission, and disputing on the road with fanatic Moslems as fearlessly as he had denounced the cant of Christianity from the platform of Exeter Hall. The first Englishman to visit Merv,* so also was he the last; no other traveller having visited the oasis previous to 1831, and none since he passed through the place in 1844. Whatever differences may exist as to his character as missionary, and however much geographers may despise him for writing so much of creeds and personages in his books of travel, and so little of places and things, it is impossible not to applaud the high courage of a man who could walk straight through a cut-throat region to the worst haunt of vice and murder in Asia, where no Englishman dared to venture at the time, and where none has succeeded in setting his foot since.

In his queer costume, Wolff travelled through Persia to Merv, and arrived in due course at Bokhara, where he found that the two envoys had been cruelly murdered. For a time it seemed as though Wolff also was destined to share the same fate; but, after a long and anxious imprisonment, he managed to get away, and returned to England *viâ* Merv and Persia.

* Wolff was a naturalised Englishman. It may not be generally known that Sir Henry Drummond Wolff is his son. I do not know who is the more to be envied, Joseph Wolff for having such a son, or Drummond Wolff for having such a father.

On the previous occasion of his visit to Merv and Bokhara, he had come back home in the direction of Afghanistan and India, meeting at Cabul a traveller who was fated to share with him the honour of being one of the earliest explorers of the Turcoman region. Lieutenant Burnes, afterwards Sir Alexander, had been deputed in 1831 in a political capacity to the court of Lahore, and the success of his exploration of the Indus region tempted him to extend his journey to Central Asia. The design received the liberal encouragement of Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General of India at the time, and Burnes successively visited Cabul (May, 1832), Balkh (June 9), Bokhara, Merv (August 29), Sarakhs (September 2), Meshed (September 14), and Teheran (October 21), traversing a region recently the scene of Wolff's journey on foot, and forming the present dissolving zone between the empires of Russia and England. Burnes retained the character of a European, but accommodated himself in dress, habits, and customs to the various peoples he mingled with. This course he pursued "on account of the utter helplessness of supporting a disguise of a native, and from having observed that no European has ever journeyed in such countries without suspicion, and seldom without discovery. From long intercourse with Asiatics, I had acquired some insight into their character, and possessed at the same time a fair colloquial knowledge of the Persian language, the *lingua franca* of the people I should meet. I did not, then, hesitate to appear among them in their own garb, and avow myself a foreigner."

Burnes successfully accomplished his journey, and

wrote a book of travels, which, after a lapse of nearly half a century, still charms the student with its simplicity, and serves the statesman as a text-book to the Turcoman region and the district lying between Balkh and Cabul. Burnes imagined that the "comparative ease and immunity from danger" with which he had achieved his travels, would stimulate others to follow his footsteps; but years had to elapse before Stoddart visited Bokhara, and the discouragement which the terrible fate of that unlucky envoy produced, is perceptible even at such a distant period as to-day.

The next to visit Merv after Wolff and Burnes was Major James Abbott, of the Bengal Artillery. On Christmas Eve, 1839, this gallant officer was despatched on a political mission to Khiva, then in danger of being subjugated by Perovsky's expedition from Orenburg. Abbott travelled in Afghan attire, "consisting of a double set of stiff petticoats." He was well treated by the Turcomans of Merv on his way to Khiva, and relates in a terse, graphic style his numerous adventures in the desert. In his days Khiva was still a powerful state, exercising suzerainty over most of the Turcoman tribes, and holding Merv, which strategical point was too far distant from the Cossack frontier posts to be considered much menaced by Russia. On this account Abbott devotes but little of his attention to the oasis, and in many of his details is content to repeat the information already collected and published by Burnes. From Khiva the Bengal officer proceeded across the Turcoman desert to the Caspian at Mangishlak, traversing part of the ground which had been crossed in 1819 by Captain Mouravieff. His seizure by the Kuzzacks of the Caspian coast, the

dangers he underwent during his captivity among them, and his miraculous release through the marvellous fidelity of a messenger despatched from Herat by Major Todd, render his travels so exciting and interesting, that it is a matter of wonder that they should have escaped the notice of publishers who make a specialty of issuing popular reprints.*

Following close upon Abbott's footsteps came Richmond Shakespear (afterwards, Sir), passing through Merv to Khiva only a few months later (1840), and in common with a third envoy, William Taylour Thomson (1843), subsequently our minister at Teheran, leaving no volume behind him as a permanent record of his travels. In 1837 Baron Bode, a Russian, visited the east Caspian coast, and repeated his journey in 1848. Articles describing his experiences among the Turcomans were published in a Russian and a Parisian review, but attracted little attention in this country, and like the *Travels in Persia* of Blaramberg, a Russian officer (1837–40), have entirely faded from public notice. In 1843 Flores Naselli penetrated to Merv. Naselli was a Neapolitan adventurer, and soldier by profession. He was probably attracted to the east by the splendid career of his countryman, General Ivatabile, in the service of Runjeet Singh. The Neapolitan proceeded to Bokhara some time after the execution of Stoddart and Conolly, in spite of advice to the contrary, and placed his

* Those who are unable to obtain a copy of *The Journey from Heraut to Khiva*, will find an admirably condensed account of the Major's adventures in Hutton's *Central Asia*.

military science at the disposal of the Emir. As, however, he had no acquaintance with the languages of the country, and the treacherous Abdul Samed Khan, a great enemy of Europeans, feared to find in him a rival, he was arrested as a spy within a week of his arrival, and summarily put to death.

In 1845 J. P. Ferrier performed his celebrated caravan journey through Central Asia. Born a Frenchman, of respectable parents, he enlisted as a private soldier, served with distinction in Africa, and in 1840 was selected with a number of other officers to proceed to Persia, to organize the Shah's army; the English military mission (comprising, among others, Sir Justin Sheil, Colonel Farrant, Major D'Arcy Todd, and Sir Henry Rawlinson) having been withdrawn a few months earlier, on the rupture of diplomatic relations with the court of Teheran. After serving in Persia several years, Ferrier was discharged through the intrigues of the Russian ambassador, who disliked him for his opposition to Russian interests, and returned to France with the honorary rank of Adjutant-General. Failing to induce M. Guizot, Frist Minister of France, to attend to his grievances against the Shah, Ferrier turned his steps again eastward in 1845, determined to seek his fortune at Lahore, where several of his countrymen were serving under Runjeet Singh. He stayed a short time at Bagdad, and started thence for Lahore, by way of Persia and Afghanistan.

M. Ferrier reached Herat, *viâ* Meshed, seven years after its celebrated siege by Persia, and four years after the English evacuation of Afghanistan. Disguised in Arab costume, he proceeded thence to Kooshk Rabat,

Maimene, Andkhoi, Balkh, and across the Hindoo Koosh to within a short distance of Cabul. Baffled in his attempt to pass that city to Lahore, he struck off to the west, was stopped and sent to Herat, journeyed thence to Candahar, and turning back again to Herat, proceeded home through Meshed. His line of march everywhere, except at Andkhoi, led him just outside the Turcoman border; and thus, although his valuable work of travels contains some of the most important information we possess of the Turcoman tribes, he does not speak with the authority of an eye-witness. His description of the ravaged region lying outside Turkmenia does not, however, lie open to the same objection, and it must not be forgotten that he had constant opportunities of mixing with Turcomans of various tribes while on his caravan journeys.

Wolff's visit to Merv in 1844, and Ferrier's travels near the oasis a year later, may be said to have closed the series of attempts to explore Turkmenia, commencing with Baillie Fraser twenty-three years earlier. From the works the little band of travellers published on their return to Europe, the public acquired the impression that the Turcomans were implacable, blood-thirsty savages, endowed with a predatory spirit against friend and foe. The tribes also possessing but very little political importance, no one desirous of fame, and solicitous at the same time of his personal safety, cared to risk his life among them. Nearly 20 years elapsed before a fresh attempt was made to acquire a knowledge of the Turcomans and the triangular region between Herat, Khiva, and Bokhara, and it does not say much for the credit of England that the

explorer should have been a Hungarian, and he a cripple.*

Arminius Vámbéry was born at Duna Gzerdahely, situated on one of the largest islands in the Danube. "Impelled by a particular inclination to linguistic science," he had "in early youth occupied himself with several languages of Europe and Asia." This led him later on to proceed to Constantinople, "where several years' residence in Turkish houses, and frequent visits to Islamitic schools and libraries, soon transformed" him "into a Turk, if not an Efendi." In 1863 he proceeded to Teheran, and prepared to journey to Khiva, Bokhara, and Afghanistan, in the disguise of a dervish. It argues much for the wonderful linguistic powers† of the Hungarian, that he should have been able to mix with the various natives of Central Asia, and converse in their numerous dialects without suffering detection — detection that would have been instantly followed by a cruel and agonizing death.

Of the difficulty of sustaining a disguise among Asiatics, the explorer Conolly, who tried the rôle of desert trader, himself bears witness:—"If I were to travel again in such countries in the disguise of a native, I would take the character of a poor one; but I think that a European can hardly hope to escape detection, for, though he may be conversant with the

* Blôcqueville's visit to Merv in 1860 cannot be regarded in the light of an exploration. A photographer attached to the invading Persian army, he was taken prisoner, and was only ransomed, after a long captivity among the Tekkes, by the payment by the French Government of 10,000 ducats.

† Vámbéry, I believe, speaks fluently 14 languages.

idioms of the language, his mode of delivery, his manner even of sitting, walking, or riding—in short, his *tout ensemble*, is different from that of an Asiatic, and the very care that he takes not to betray himself gives him an air that causes him to be noticed. A man may, I think, get on best in the character of a French or Italian doctor. These itinerant gentry are sometimes met with, and as their country is supposed to be somewhere about the antipodes, they are not viewed with distrust. Among people so ignorant, a Sangrado may pass for a great hakeem; the simplest medicines will cure their ailments, and you may tell those beyond your skill that it is not their *nusseeb* (fortune) to be cured. No character will gain you such good treatment, and it has this great advantage, that it does not oblige you to conceal your religion, or, what is worse, to affect the Mahommedan. Few will question you, and you may make free use of the names of their most esteemed hakeems Solerat and Bokrat, Sokman and Aboo Allee Seina, but if you should happen to meet a man of as great pretensions as yourself, and he should begin to try you with queries, ask him whether a shivering fever is a cold or hot disease."

The task the lame man Vámbéry set himself to achieve was not an easy one. It was simple enough to assume the rags and dirt of a dervish, to wear a felt jacket and patchwork robe, to twine strips of ragged linen round his feet, and fix on his head an immense turban, "serving as a parasol by day and a pillow by night"; but when it came to associating with the holy beggars, he found it a most anxious task to suppress his European habits, for, as he says,

"we occidentals eat, drink, sleep, sit, and stand, nay, I feel inclined to say, laugh, weep, sigh, and gesticulate, otherwise than Eastern people. I shudder even now when I think back of the fatigue I underwent during the first few days, and how much I suffered from the wet and cold, the uncleanliness—which makes one's hair stand on end—and the never ending harassing worry with the fanatic Sheeahs during our long and tedious daily marches in Mazendran. Sometimes it rained from early in the morning until late in the evening, and whilst not a thread of my tattered garments remained dry, I was, moreover, obliged to wade for hours knee-deep in mud. Being conscious of my habit of gesticulating with the hands when speaking—a habit peculiar to many Europeans, but strictly forbidden in Central Asia,—and fearing lest I should commit this mistake, I adopted a coercive remedy. I pretended to suffer from pains in the arms, and strapping them down to the body, they soon lost the habit of involuntary movement. In like manner I seldom ventured to make a hearty meal late in the evening, for fear of being troubled with heavy dreams, which might cause me to speak some foreign language. I bore in mind the words of my companions, who observed one morning with great naïveté, that my snoring sounded differently from that of the Turkestanis, whereupon another interrupted and informed him: "Yes, thus people snore in Constantinople."

Elsewhere he tells us of a droll incident, fraught with danger of discovery, which occurred to him in Bokhara. "As is well known, the difference in the

washing of the arm produces apparent consequences. On this part of the body, among the Sunnis, in consequence of ablutions five times a day from earliest youth, the points of the hairs incline towards the palm of the hand. Among the Sheeahs, on the contrary, they incline towards the elbow; and hence, from the appearance of the hairs, the religious sect of the individual may be inferred. The astonishment of some Bokhariots may be imagined when they discovered that my hairs neither inclined upwards or downwards, but grew all round my arm. 'A remarkable Mussulman that!' they said, 'an unknown race.' And I am certainly regarded by many, even at the present day, as an abortion in the Islam growth of hair."

Drenched with rain and bespattered with mud in Mazendran, his secret nearly discovered by a keen-eyed Russian at Ashoorada, and by a suspicious Turcoman at the mouth of the Goorgan, the false dervish with his mendicant comrades trudged over the great burning expanse of clay and sand lying between the Caspian and Khiva; passing near Kizil Arvat, and traversing a waste since whitened with the bones of hundreds of wretched Russian soldiers, victims to the frightful heat and the intolerable thirst accompanying ill-chosen summer campaigns in the desert, and the desperate attacks of Tekke Turcomans. Dreadfully disfigured by the hardships he had undergone, Vámbéry, by the time he had reached Khiva, had grown callous to his perilous surroundings. "Still, no European can realise to himself what it was to stand, a disguised Frenghi (this word of terror to the Orientals!), face to face with such a tyrant as the

Khan of Khiva, and to have to bestow upon him the customary benediction. If this man were to discover the dangerous trick, this man with the sallow face and sinister look, as he sits there surrounded by his satellites—such an idea is only endurable to the mind steeled to the highest pitch of resolution." Had he been discovered, the penalty would have been to have had his eyes gouged out, or to have been buried up to his chin in earth and then pelted to death with clay pellets, or to have been murdered in some other miserable and agonizing manner.

From Khiva Vámbéry, still with the pilgrims, journeyed across the desert to Bokhara, where he had before him the fate of poor Stoddart, who had been imprisoned naked two months in a loathsome well, 21 feet deep, stocked with swarms of vermin and reptiles to feed on the captive's flesh, and who, after having been bastinadoed till the skin peeled off his feet, had been barbarously put to death like a sheep in the presence of a few passers by, attracted to the spot by his cries and invectives. The Emir severely examined the dervish's countenance to discover whether he was a Frenghi in disguise, and it cost him, he says, "a great effort not to betray by my countenance, and especially by my eyes, the excitement within me; and although I shook and trembled in every nerve, I was obliged to suppress even the slightest symptom of fear." Leaving Samarcand, Vámbéry journeyed to Kerki, on the Oxus; and thence through the country of the Ersari Turcomans and the Djemshidi and Hazare tribes to Herat, from which city he took the usual caravan road to Meshed and Teheran

home. His safe arrival after so many dangers provoked great sensation in Europe, which feeling was still further increased by the publication in London of his *Travels in Central Asia*, undoubtedly one of the finest books of the kind we have in the English language, as well for graphic and forcible diction as for the adventures described. Even after a lapse of 15 years the work remains unsurpassed. Burnes' *Bokhara* may have yielded a larger share of geographical information, Ferrier's *Caravan Journeys* may have been more elaborate and precise, but it is only by reading Vámbéry's *Travels* that one gets the true aroma of the East, and realises what Central Asia really is.

On returning to Europe, Arminius Vámbéry had two courses open to him to pursue; to take either the side of Russia, or of England, in their quarrel about Central Asia. It requires but little knowledge of Russia to be aware that had he given his support to that country in her schemes of aggrandisement, he would have been deluged with those favours which the Czar's statesmen know so well how to confer upon powerful writers who assist them: his visits to Russia would have received Imperial notice, decorations would have been bestowed upon him, high appointments would have been placed at his command, or, if it were deemed preferable that he should appear to the public as an independent Continental observer, grants from the Czar's privy purse would have found their way to his banker's.*

* The name of a certain naval constructor will readily occur to the reader, who, in defiance of professional opinion in England and Russia, publicly lauded the ridiculous hobbies of a Russian admiral,

Vámbéry's convictions, however, led him to side with England, and he refused all offers to make himself a Russian tool. For 15 years he has unswervingly adhered to the line he then took up. It has cost him all his friends in Russia. It has most decidedly not enriched him. It has brought him no honours. It has even made him unpopular in his own country. Worse than all, however, is the disgraceful fact that it has brought upon his head the invective and abuse of the Liberal party and Radical tail in this country, and has made him the butt of men whose frantic foolishness is so often mistaken abroad for expressions of English public opinion.

On the occasion of his visit to England in April, 1880, to lecture upon the Turcomans, he was led indignantly to reply to Sir Erskine Perry (a politician of the class loving every country better than his own) that he "never thought he should have had to defend England against Englishmen." I myself am no Russophobist. Indeed, my feelings towards Russia are such that, were I not an Englishman, I would most decidedly prefer being a Russian to any other form of foreigner. My belief in the future of the Russian Empire is only surpassed in my faith in the future of our own. Above all, I hold strongly to the opinion that did Russia and England know each other better there would be a subsidence of the present feeling of

and not only personally advanced himself by his advocacy of Russia's interests—it being her interest in 1875 to appear a great European naval Power, but got rewarded by the Gladstone Government in 1880 by the gift of a knighthood; a knighthood for having served Russia better than his own country, and for having occasioned thereby a waste of millions by England over useless ironclads.

hostility, and believe that the war of faction in England is as much to blame for the Central Asian sore as the aggressive policy of Russia's generals and statesmen. As a Russophile, then, I protest against the unmanly way that Arminius Vámbéry has been attacked by Russophiles for supporting England against Russia in their rivalry in the East, and, as an Englishman of the middle-class, I believe I only give expression to the opinion of the weightiest section of the nation in affirming that that section is deeply sensible of the Hungarian's services, and holds him and them in affectionate esteem.

The sufferings experienced by Vámbéry in Central Asia had one effect. Travellers for a time avoided the Turcoman region and Khorassan. True, in 1872, when the Russians, who had occupied Krasnovodsk three years earlier, penetrated to Kizil Arvat and Beurma, Colonel Stebnitzsky, Chief of the Caucasian Topographical Department, made a survey of the western part of Akhal, and in subsequent years the remainder of the Trans-Caspian steppe was mapped, but military reconnoitrings do not strictly come under the heading of exploration, especially when the information obtained is locked up in Russian archives. It was not till 1872 that any private attempt was made to penetrate to the Turcoman region or to its border, Captain Marsh in that year performing a *Ride through Islam*, by way of Astrabad, Meshed, and Herat, and publishing his experiences afterwards in a singularly meagre book of travels. The following year, Colonel Valentine Baker, accompanied by Lieutenant Gill, paid a visit to the mouth of the Atrek; and being furnished with letters from the Prince of Wales and

the Grand Duke Michael, was able to visit Tchikishlar, then a place of trifling importance. Afterwards, proceeding to the Turcoman frontier, he had the good fortune to be invited to a hunting excursion to Akhal by the Governor of Mahomedabad, and was enabled thereby to get a glimpse of Abiverd and the Tekke region midway between Akhal and Merv. Baker wrote to Kooshoot Khan, the leader of the Merv Tekkes, for permission to pay him a visit; but this was refused him, and, having no support from the English Government, he was unable to force himself upon the chief's hospitality. His *Clouds in the East*, published on his return to London, was a valuable contribution to Khorassan literature, and the excellent map he gives of the region traversed is the best obtainable in England, even so late as to-day.

In 1874 Captain Napier, son of Lord Napier of Magdala, explored, in the capacity of a Government agent, the Perso-Turcoman frontier, repeating his visit several times in subsequent years. Most of his information has been kept under lock and key at Simla, or in the India Office, and the public are thus not much the wiser for his travels. In 1875 Colonel C. M. McGregor (recently knighted in Afghanistan), one of the bravest and cleverest officers of the Indian army, explored the greater part of Northern Persia, publishing his experiences four years later under the title of a *Journey through Khorassan*. Being refused admission to Herat, Colonel McGregor rode on to the North Persian frontier, with the intention of visiting Merv; Kooshoot Khan inviting him warmly to his stronghold and offering, as a hostage, Berdi Murad, son of Noor Verdi Khan (subsequently successor of Koo-

shoot), the gallant leader of the Akhal Tekkes whose heroic death in front of the Russian cannon was one of the most tragic episodes of the storming of Dengeel Tepé.

Unfortunately, Colonel McGregor had allowed his projected journey to become known to the English embassy at Teheran, and just when he was about to set out for Merv, he received the following letter from the Ambassador:—"I have the honour, by the direction of His Excellency the Viceroy of India, to inform you that you are prohibited from travelling in Afghanistan or Turkestan, or going beyond the boundary of Persia." The traveller says:—"The letter dropped from my hand, and for a moment I felt quite sick with the bitter disappointment these words caused me. Picking it up, I again and again read it, still with a faint scintillation of hope that it might not quite exclude me from the enterprise. But the words were only too clear. 'You are not to enter Turkestan or Afghanistan, or go beyond the boundary of Persia.' Not to enter Turkestan or Afghanistan or go beyond the border of Persia, it was clear, I was debarred from going anywhere of the smallest interest, or offering the least hopes of distinction; and then I remembered Mr. Aitchison's* frigid rejection of my offer for *any information*, and I confessed, with bitterness, that I had been forewarned.

"I *had* been forewarned, but I had, in the days when the spirit of adventure rose in me, not heeded the warning. I argued: I can understand their not wishing to send me on a formal mission, I can quite

* Foreign Secretary to Viceroy Lytton.

understand the frame of mind which would make a man think it is better to save a few rupees *in his time* than spend it on a venture which may only bear fruit *after* he has gone; but surely, when I have not asked for the expenditure of one farthing, or even asked for any responsibility entailing one iota of responsibility on Government, I shall be let alone, even if it should become known that I proposed to extend my travels. But the result proved otherwise. Whether the letter was due to the sole unaided intellect of him from whom the order emanated, or whether I owed it to the promptings of anyone seized by the curse of jealousy or the more withering canker of over-zeal, it proved the extent to which 'masterly inactivity' could go. With a sickening feeling I remembered that I had marched all these miles, endured all these hardships, risked my health and life, and spent my hardly-won coin, for nothing."

At no cost to the country, and at no great risk of foreign entanglement, England might have obtained then what she so badly needs now—a complete military survey of Merv and Akhal. It was her first chance. The Government rejected it. We shall see directly that two other chances were also rejected by the Beaconsfield administration.

In 1875, Captain Burnaby undertook his famous ride to Khiva, reaching the city in January, 1876. It was his intention to proceed thence to Merv, but just as he was on the point of riding away from Khiva, he was stopped by a telegram from the Duke of Cambridge, ordering his immediate return home. Pressure had been put on the English Government by the Russian Ambassador, Count Schouvaloff, and the

Government, to conciliate Russia, had ordered Burnaby home. This was England's second chance of obtaining a military survey of Merv and Akhal free of expense.

While Burnaby was travelling home through Orenburg, receiving on the way the good-humoured jeers of Russians, delighted at the Captain's failure, another English officer, in the dress of a Chinaman, was trying to penetrate to Merv from the other side of Central Asia, *i.e.* from Khorassan. Captain Francis Butler was led to assume the guise of a "heathen Chinee," because he did not speak the Persian language. It may have been this drawback that hindered him from reaching the Tekke oasis. At any rate, for some unexplained cause, he returned to India without having succeeded in making his way to Merv. The Viceroy, we have seen, had prevented Colonel McGregor from riding to Merv, and was aware that the Government at home had recalled Captain Burnaby for fear of giving offence to Russia, yet, shortly after Captain Butler's return to India, he secretly furnished that officer with funds, and sent him on the sly to the Turcoman frontier. As to what Butler saw and did in that distant region, the public have no knowledge beyond a few newspaper reports, more or less confused, of his operations. But it is said that the agent of the Viceroy penetrated to within 40 miles of Merv, and that he was then recalled to India, and disgraced, for some unassigned reason, by being sent back at once, without any explanation, to his regiment.

From Blue Books it appears that M. de Giers, the astute head of the Russian Foreign Office, had set

Bakouline, the Russian Consul at Astrabad, to watch Napier and Butler at Meshed, and that Bakouline had reported that the latter was inciting the Turcomans against Russia. Thereupon, M. de Giers had remonstrated with Lord Loftus, and our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, consciously or unconsciously, had deviated from the truth by representing Captain Butler in the light of a traveller on his own account. The inaccuracy of this had then been exposed, and afterwards Lord Lytton, to get out of one scrape, had involved himself in another by disowning and discarding Butler, thereby inducing that aggrieved officer to disclose the plot. This was England's third and last time of obtaining a military survey of Merv and Akhal.

It is well to note now the reciprocal action of Russia. To avoid giving that country offence, the government had recalled three travellers in succession. *Immediately afterwards*, Colonel Matvaeff set out to explore the Afghan province of Badakshan, and Colonel Grodekoff performed his famous ride from Samarcand to Herat—Herat, the key of India, infinitely more precious to us than Merv to Russia, and treated with such sentimental delicacy by the Indian Government, that the Viceroy had stopped Colonel McGregor from going there in 1875, for fear of offending the Afghans. The English Government made no protest against this treatment. They took it as meekly as they had taken the despatch of the Stolietoff mission to Cabul in the same eventful year, 1878.*

* Compare the tame and timid spirit of the Beaconsfield Government with the audacious rudeness of Russia. Mr. O'Donovan wrote from Astrabad, April 18th, 1880:—"Last year, when it was known

We have seen how Lord Lytton, the expounder of a "spirited policy," had snubbed Colonel McGregor when he heard that the best Intelligence officer in India had in view a military visit to Merv. Compare this with General Kaufmann's treatment of Colonel Grodekoff:—"The General not only warmly acceded to my request for leave to relinquish my duties, and proceed home by way of Afghanistan and Persia" (*i.e.* through Balkh, Herat, Merv, and Meshed), "but also offered me pecuniary assistance for the journey. This offer, for various reasons, I declined, but accepted twenty silver articles for presents on the way." The Governor-General also furnished him with the following pass, in Russian, Persian, and Toorkee:—"The bearer of this, Colonel Grodekoff, accompanied by his servants, is proceeding to Russia, with my permission, *viâ* Afghanistan and Persia. On that account I beg all functionaries who may be found along the route traversed by Colonel Grodekoff, to accord him assistance and protection. September 21 (O.S.), Tashkent. —Kaufmann."

that Captain Napier was travelling between here and Herat, the Russian Consul (Bakouline), though very ill at the time, suffering from a dropsical affection of both legs, was obliged to start off after him and follow him in all his wanderings, keeping two stages' journey behind, in order to avoid observation, and to see if the captain had been intriguing anywhere." Had Napier been a Russian it is a certainty Russia would have remonstrated vigorously against such uncourteous espionage. Contrast also this vigilance of Russia with the slackness of England. Consul Churchill was removed from Astrabad to Palermo in the spring of 1880, yet, in December, there was still no one in his place, although the Gladstone Government knew Skobeleff was preparing a great expedition against Merv, and that the consular post had been expressly established at Astrabad for the purpose of watching over Russian operations on the Atrek.

We have also seen how Lord Lytton treated Butler on his return from the Turcoman frontier. Colonel Grodekoff, on *his* return, was honoured with an audience of the Czar, and received as a reward for his ride a much-prized decoration. Our own travellers, McGregor and Burnaby, got no thanks from Government for their arduous exertions on behalf of England; and the latter, whose experiences should have made him a valuable adjunct to our army during the Afghan war, was quietly shelved at home. Colonel Grodekoff, on the other hand, was rewarded by being sent to the Turcoman region, as the chief of Skobeleff's staff.

While Captain Butler, in his Chinaman's dress, was trying to penetrate to Merv in 1871, another officer, Colonel Petroosevitch, of the Russian army, was also engaged on the Turcoman frontier effecting a military survey. Petroosevitch had taken part in several of the Russian campaigns against the Turcomans, and was better acquainted with the Aral-Caspian region, perhaps, than any traveller alive. On his return to Tiflis in 1878, he contributed, at different times, to the journal of the Caucasian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, articles on the Turcomans, which will be found incorporated in this volume. The Russian Government did not reward him by sending him back to his regiment a disgraced man, but promoted him to the rank of Major-General, and made him Governor of the Transcaspian region, in succession to Lomakin. He is the designer of the railway to Kizil Arvat.

In 1879, Mr. O'Donovan, a Special Correspondent of the *Daily News*, attached himself to the army under General Lazareff, then preparing at Tchikishlar to in-

vade Akhal; but from illness, and the refusal of the authorities to allow him to proceed to the front, saw nothing of the actual campaign, and, on the return of the troops, was expelled from the Transcaspian region. During the winter he wandered about the Goorgan border, picking up news, and in the spring started off for Meshed, with the object of visiting either Akhal or Merv. Thus far, he has not been successful in his undertaking; but it is too soon to say that he has failed, and the public have the satisfaction, at least, of knowing that he is not an English officer, liable to be dragged home when within sight of Merv, to conciliate a Power that has never shown any reciprocal deference for the feelings of this country.*

* It is to be deplored that the Royal Geographical Society should have done absolutely nothing in exploring the Turcoman region. Its apathy contrasts strongly with the activity of the Imperial Geographical Society in Russia. At the least it might devote some of its funds towards the translation into English of the numerous valuable Russian maps existing.

CHAPTER II.

TURKMENIA.

Major Abbott's description of the region.—Conolly's account of the Transcaspian steppes.—Their capability for cultivation.—Vámbéry's "whole secret of the fertility" of Turkmenia.—Peculiar properties of the steppe grass.—Experience of the Russian troops in 1879.—Conflagrations in the desert.—Conolly's description of a march across the desert.—The Turcoman steppes not a desert in the Sahara sense of the expression.—Baillie Fraser's description of the Goorgan region.—A delightful country.—Burnes' account of Budjnurd and Akhal.—The easiest route to Herat.—The best of the three roads to Meshed.—The annexation of the Goklan region by Russia unnoticed by England.

"The Russians are steadily advancing towards India, and they will, sooner or later, acquire a position in Central Asia which will enable them to threaten it. Should England be engaged in a European war, and not show herself sufficiently accommodating on the Bosphorus, then, indeed, Russia would probably strike a blow at England's Indian Empire."—MacGahan.

"In speaking of the Turcomans * and their country, I shall adopt the term of Turkmenia, since it describes the people under a generic name, which is not altogether unknown in Europe, and not likely to lead

* Major Abbott.

into mistakes. Turkmenia, then, is that country lying south of the Oxus, or Turkestan, stretching from Balkh to the shores of the Caspian, and filling up the space between that sea and the Aral. On the south it is bounded by hills, the continuation of Hindoo Koosh, and the Paropamisus of the ancients. A line drawn from Balkh to Astrabad on the Caspian —which two places are nearly in the same parallel of latitude—will separate the country of the Turcomans from that of the Afghans and Persians. On the south-eastern shore of the Caspian, where Turkmenia adjoins Persia, the country is mountainous, and watered by the rivers of Goorgan and Atrek, which fall into that sea. In all other places it is a flat and sandy desert, scantily supplied with water. The streams that flow from the mountains are speedily absorbed by the sand, and never force their passage to the Oxus. The greatest of these is the Moorgab, or Merv river, and the Tedjend, which passes Sarakhs. This country is destitute of towns and villages, for the Turcomans are an erratic tribe, and wander from one well to another with their herds and flocks, taking their conical *khirgahs*, or huts, along with them, in search of water and pasture.

"The desert of the Turcomans is a vast ocean of sand, flat in some places, and rising in others to mounds, such as are seen on the sea-shore. It increases in volume towards the Caspian, and in that vicinity the sand-hills attain a height of sixty and eighty feet. They appeared to rise from a hard caked surface of clay, which was observal in several places. There was little difficulty in crossing these sand-hills, and the wells, though few in number, offer their supply of

water at no great distance from the surface, seldom exceeding the depth of forty feet. Such is the desert of the Turcomans, inhabited, too, by a tribe of people who boast that they neither rest under the shade of a tree or a king."

"The Caspian desert * is generally of light soil, white, and inclined to be sandy, yet so firm, that in dry weather camels barely leave the print of their feet upon it. This soil produces light thorns and weedy bushes, much of the juicy camel-thorn, a root like the stem of a vine, called taukh, and stunted tamarisk bushes; in parts spring patches of coarse grass, probably where water is near the surface. Much of the ground is hard, and quite bare, showing occasionally patches of salt, doubtless the cause of the sterility. A third feature is the sand; this is either spread loosely over the plain, or is gathered in broad ridges, which assume some consistency. Near such spots the Turcomans prefer to pitch their tents: their camps are more private and sheltered, and good water is found at no great depth. We satisfied ourselves that it would not be difficult for a power stronger than the Turcomans to reclaim a considerable portion of this waste inland from the coast. Much of the soil (that especially between the rivers Goorgan and Atrek) is good, and water is to be had for little labour."

Vámbéry also says that, "experience shows that irrigation carried on for several years creates an alluvial soil, which is the whole secret of fertility." Further on we shall notice Petroosevitch's ambitious

* Conolly.

scheme for converting the Turcoman desert into pastoral plains, for rearing Russian cattle.

"The grass of the steppe," states Ferrier "is sweet and nutritious, but is found only in the spring. It produces in the Turcoman horses a higher temperature and better condition of blood, as well as a peculiar elasticity and strength of muscle quite wonderful." When the Russian army returned defeated from Dengeel Tepé in October 1879, the troops found the Atrek desert, which they had traversed a few weeks earlier, when it was blazing hot, waterless, and as bare of vegetation as a baker's oven, to be transformed into meadow land, dotted with numerous lakes and streams, and covered with grass and reeds. Of the Turcoman summer Vámbéry says:—

"During the hot season of the year, when the scorching sun has dried shrubs and grass till they become like tinder, it often happens that a spark, carelessly dropped, and fanned by the wind, will set the steppe on fire. The flame, finding ever fresh fuel, spreads with such fearful rapidity, that a man on horseback can with difficulty escape. It rolls over the scanty herbage like an overflowing stream, and when it meets with thicket and shrubs, it flares up with wild wrath. Thus traversing large tracts of country in a short time, its raging course can only be checked by a river or a lake. At night such conflagrations must present a terrible appearance, when far and wide the horizon is lit up with a sea of flame. Even the bravest heart loses its courage at the appalling sight. The cowardly and hesitating are soon destroyed, but one who has sufficient presence

of mind can save himself, if, while the flames are yet a great way off, he kindle the grass in his neighbourhood. He thus lays waste a space in which the approaching fire can find no sustenance, and in this he takes refuge. Thus only with fire can man contend against fire with success.

"This weapon is often used by one tribe against another, and the desolation thus caused is terrible. It is often used by a runaway couple to secure themselves against pursuit. As long as no wind blows they can easily fly before the slowly advancing fire but it often happens that the flames are hurried forward by the least breath of wind, and the fugitives find a united death in the very means they had taken to secure their safety."

Conolly describes a march in the Caspian steppes: —"We were *en route* again at half-past ten, and journeyed all day over a barren white plain, on which there was not a blade of herbage—not a weed. In parts it was strongly impregnated with salt, and portions of soil on which the mineral lay in a thin crust, when refracted in the extreme distance, had the appearance of white buildings. The hard earth sounded under the horses' feet, but some tracks of deep camel foot-marks, that crossed the plain, showed that earlier in the spring it had been watered. These and the bones of a camel which lay bleaching in the sun, were the only signs we had of any other living thing having passed over so waste a place. Before us was apparently a forest, but, when we neared it at evening, we found only large bushes growing in deep sand, with here and there a small tree; so much did the mirage deceive us, accustomed as we had become

to its illusions. A cuckoo was singing on the decayed branches of a small tree; we saw some beautifully-coloured paroquets (the body green, head and wings of a rich brown colour), and a flight of birds like the Indian minas; and, desolate as the scene was, there was a beauty about it in the stilness of broad twilight Occasionally, during our journey from Goorgan, we had started a hare from her form; many antelopes bounded across the plain; and the desert rat (an animal rather slighter than a common rat, with a tuft on the tip of his tail, and which springs with four feet, like the kangaroo) was everywhere common."

The heat and the dryness of the air in the summer in the Turcoman steppes are appalling, but the region is not desert, in the Sahara sense of the term, as in September heavy rains commence to fall, and during their continuance the country presents the appearance of plains of saturated clay, affording abundance of water and forage for horses. This description applies particularly to the country between the Atrek and Sumbar rivers and the Caspian. Eastward of those streams is a region, belonging to the Goklan tribe and adjacent to Akhal, which boasts of a fine climate all the year round, as well as a magnificent soil and splendid vegetation. It will be seen that all travellers bear out the correctness of these laudatory expressions. Here is a sketch by Baillie Fraser:—"Our path lay through fields and natural meadows of the richest verdure, among groves of oak, clothed in their young leaves of the most delicate hues; broken into glades and lawns like velvet. On our left were mountains of the noblest forms, covered with wood, or diversified with rocks, glens, and valleys, and green

sunny slopes, speckled with scattered trees; on our right were the boundless plains stretching away to the north and north-west, all rich with verdure, and covered with Goklan encampments, whose smoke arose in the mid-day sun, and whose flocks and herds were scattered wildly over the surrounding pastures. A more perfectly pastoral, peaceful, and delicious scene could not be imagined; and it was melancholy to reflect, that this, the fairest spot of the Persian dominions, instead of supporting a rich and happy peasantry, should be usurped and retained by hordes of lawless robbers, who, incapable themselves of appreciating the blessings they have seized, prevent all others from turning them to better account, commit outrages of all kinds upon their neighbours, and make a trade of plundering both property and person. Were any proof of the weakness and misrule of the Persian Government required, in addition to those that everywhere meet the traveller's eye, a view of the state of this country would furnish a most conclusive one."

And, in another place:—"Thus, then, we reach Astrabad, journeying through a country which for beauty and richness I have seldom seen equalled, and never surpassed. The former I have made some attempts to describe; of the latter some idea may be formed when it is stated, on the authority of all those of the country with whom I conversed on the subject, that the wandering tribes, whose culture, it may be presumed, is not of the best description, reap full forty and fifty returns for their seed. They, however, have their full choice of the plains; the villagers are more circumscribed in their range—they cannot venture to

cultivate in the open plains, or far from their villages in any direction; consequently their land is more exhausted, and the return is less, although everywhere it is abundant.

"But what paradise is perfect? This splendid country is afflicted by the heavy calamities of disease and constant insecurity. The quantity of rain that falls in the season, and which stagnates in the deep forests, turning them often into impassable morasses, becomes putrid from the quantity of decayed vegetable matter it receives, and in the heats of summer and autumn exhales a most pestilential vapour. The wandering tribes fly from the influence of this, beyond the Goorgan or the Atrek, where they prefer living on the verge of the burning sand, and carrying from the distant river the water required for each day's consumption, to the least exposure to these noxious effluvia. But the inhabitants of the village have no such resource; those, indeed, who can afford it, retire from the intense heats of summer to their 'yeilaks' in the mountains; but the great majority continue exposed to all these inconveniences, and suffer severely from sickness."

Burnes describes the region between Budjnurd and Akhal as consisting of "mountains, with alternate hill and dale—a wild and romantic country. There were a few stunted pine-trees on the hills, but they are oftener bare of anything but grass." In the Goklan country "no scene could be more enchanting than that on which we had now entered; the hills were wooded to the summit, and the hue of the different trees was so varied and bright as hardly to appear natural. A rivulet flowed through

the dell; and almost every fruit grew in a state of nature. The fig, the vine, pomegranate, raspberry, black currant, and the hazel, shot up everywhere; and, as we approached the camp of the Turcomans, there were extensive plantations of the mulberry. The different groups of tents were pitched in grotesque order on the upper lawn near the river; and our party halted at one of their settlements on a beautiful shelf of green turf that lay at the base of a cloud-capped hill, clothed with the richest foliage."

The Turcoman region has been so persistently described as a mere desert, that it is well to bear in mind the foregoing glowing description ot the Goklan country. The easiest route from Russia to Herat is not viâ Merv, but through Astrabad and Meshed. To Meshed there are three roads. *The best runs through the beautiful valleys and dales of the Goklan district, and has already been partly annexed by Russia without attracting the notice of England.*

CHAPTER III.

THE ORIGIN OF THE TURCOMANS.—WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE MINOR TRIBES.

Vámbéry's account of the origin of the Turcomans.—Meaning of the term "Turcoman."—Progress of the Tekkes.—Invasions of Turkmenia.—The Shahs and the Kurds.—The relations of Khiva and Bokhara with the Turcomans.—The number of slaves in the two Khanates.—Burnes' list of the Turcoman tribes.—Position of the tribes in 1880-40.—Vámbéry's list.—Changes in the interval.—Petroosevitch's list.—Translation of Petroosevitch's account of the lesser Turcoman tribes.—The tribes subject to Bokhara.—The Ersaris.—Divisions of the tribes.—The Yomoods.—Difference between the Tchomoor and Tcharva.—The winter at Tchikishlar.—Turcoman pirates.—Statistics of the Yomood clans.—The Goklans.—Differences in the estimates of the total of the tribe.—Description of the Goklan region.—Loveliness of the scenery.—A topographical description of the Kopet Dagh and Elburz region.—"One of the most favoured spots in the world."—Ruins of ancient cities.—Rawlinson at fault.—"Happy Land."—The scourge of the Tekke Turcomans.

"Wild warriors, in stormy freedom bred."

MOORE, *Veiled Prophet.*

"In no people is the pride of birth stronger than in the Turcomans; these ugly little savages have the most sovereign contempt for their good-looking neighbours, the Persians, and believe they are the only people of any real consequence in the world."—VÁMBÉRY.

In the opinion of Professor Vámbéry,* "there is no doubt that the Turcomans belong to that branch of the Turkish race which first separated from the bulk of the natives known to have lived in pre-historic times in the Altai and in the upper regions of the Yenissei and of the Irtish, and who started the first in the search of a new home on the plains of south-western Asia. This evidently took place long before the beginning of the Christian era; possibly at the same time that the ancestors of the modern Bashkirs, Chuvashes, and Nogais appeared on the banks of the Ural, of the Dnieper, and of the Volga; and whilst these latter ones only touched in their migration the northern region of the Caspian sea, the Turcomans have spread gradually, partly southwards, partly eastwards, in the great steppes and deserts which extend on the eastern shores of the said sea towards the outlying ranges of the Hindoo Koosh. Here they lived in remote antiquity, and here they were met with by the outposts of the Roman and Greek armies; nay, I go even further in assuming that the Parthians were simply the ancestors of the present Yomoods and Tekkes, for the home of the ancient Parthians—namely, Dehestan (so called from Dahae, a Parthian tribe, as we learn from Sir Henry Rawlinson)—consisted of the region between the Atrek and the Balkan hills, at present and, as far as historical record reaches, always the abode of the Turcomans. Of course the thick veil of obscurity hanging over this part of ancient Asia does not permit us to penetrate into geographical and ethnical

* Lecture, London, April 10th, 1880.

details; for even the notions which have been handed down to us by mediæval writers on the supposed ancestors of the Turcomans are so confused, that it would be almost impossible to form a definite idea upon the relationship of the Ghuzz and certain present fractions of the nomads of the Hyrcanian steppe. There cannot be any doubt, however, as to the identity of the name Ghuzz and Turcoman, and whether the Turkish people, known under the former name, constituted only one single tribe or branch, we may, nevertheless, assume that the Turkish nomads who caused so much trouble to the Samanides and others were, strictly speaking, Turcomans, who, coming down from the north-eastern shores of the Caspian, from the Mangishlak of to-day, had already endeavoured, at that time, to get possession of that fertile tract of country which, lying to the north of Persia, along the Kopet mountains of to-day, richly irrigated, must have early attracted the cupidity of the naked children of the desert. The contest which ensued between the Turcomans and the settled Iranians was a protracted one, but in the end the barbarians got the upper hand, and, towards the end of the middle ages, places formerly flourishing in the Khorassan mountains were mere ruins, and haunted by the different tribes and branches of Turcomans bent upon war and pillage, partly in the adjacent country, partly amongst themselves."

"In the course of these continual fights and struggles, we see a few fractions of the Turcoman nation emerge into individual notoriety; for example, the Salor and Sarik, during the conquest

of the Arabs, and, strange to say, in the very place which they now occupy. A few centuries later we meet the Kara and Alieli Turcomans in a successful engagement with Sultan Sandjar around Andkhoi and Maimene, in the very place where the remnants of these once mighty tribes are actually to be found. Again, a few centuries later, other families spread their influence as far as Asia Minor. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the Ada district of the Mangishlak peninsula was entirely in the hands of the Turcomans, a place which is now almost exclusively in the hands of the Kuzzacks, and in the vicinity of which only the small tribes of Tchaudor and Imraili linger in a miserable existence. The Ersari Turcomans, to-day living between Kerki and Tchardjui, are said to have lived in the sixteenth century near the Balkan, and whilst the Tekkes had then only a secondary importance, mention is made of the tribes of Aradji, Ali, and Khizr, of which now only small traces are to be found."

We thus see that the Turcomans originated in mid-Siberia, migrated to the East Caspian region at a period probably when the Oxus ran into the Caspian, and the existing Aral-Caspian steppe was a tolerably fertile tract of ground; and that, finally, they settled along the North Persian frontier, where they are to be found to-day. In his statement that the Turcomans are of Turkish origin, Vámbéry simply repeats what Burnes said 50 years ago, and Klaproth a year or two earlier in his notes to the *Voyage de Mouraviev en Turcomanie*, and as his account is clearer and more minute than theirs we may suppress the latter. Regarding the origin of the term Turcoman

Burnes inclines to "Toork-manind," "like a Turk," from a mixture of races produced by the inhabitants of Turkmenia seizing on the neighbouring nations; and Klaproth to "Turk" and "Coman," and that it was given to that part of the Coman nation which remained on the east of the Caspian sea, under the denomination of the Turks of the Altai. Vámbéry, however, says that the "word is compounded of the proper name *Türk* and the suffix *men* (corresponding with the English suffix *ship*, *dom*); it is applied to the whole race, conveying the sense that the nomads style themselves pre-eminently Turks. The word in use with us, *Turcoman*, is a corruption of the Turkish original."*

"Notwithstanding their unbounded lust for war and their unrestrained adventurous character, which originated, to a great extent, in the naked and barren soil of the steppes, the Turcomans never rose to an united action, but were separated by continual feuds, and subjected to frequent change of abode, as well as to a constant fluctuation of their numerical conditions."† Latterly, however, the Tekke tribe has developed amazingly and absorbed the Salor tribe. Could the Russian conquest be stayed 50 years, the Tekkes might absorb the Goklans, Yomoods, and the rest of the tribes, and by a development of the principle of transmission of power from father to son, which was initiated a few years ago when Noor Verdi Khan made his son Berdi Murad leader of the Akhal Tekkes, on quitting Akhal to assume the

* *Travels in Central Asia.*
† Vámbéry's Lecture, 1880.

leadership of the Merv Tekkes, a powerful Turcoman state might grow up in northern Khorassan, and possibly spread to Herat and to the Caspian.

All writers agree that "while* the Kirghiz and other Central Asian nomads have, in retaining the vicissitudes of their nomadic existence, lost the striking features of their national individuality, owing to the intermixture of Mongolian and various South Siberian elements, the Turcoman has always remained in comparative seclusion from his nearest relatives, and this accounts mainly for his quality of an indomitable warrior, and of an indefatigable adventurer, of which he was always famous in the history of Asia."

Turkmenia has not suffered immunity from invasion. Persia has repeatedly endeavoured to break the power of the tribes. Shah Abbas the Great, in the seventeenth century, after driving them back to the Kopet Dagh, planted 15,000 Kurdish families along the border. This was not a very successful experiment at the time, as the Kurds adopted the predatory pursuits of the Turcomans, and had to be repeatedly conquered; but to-day a strong feeling of enmity exists between the Kurds and the Turcomans, and although the former do not efficiently protect the Persians, still they render the depredations of the children of the desert less dreadful than they might otherwise be. Another Persian sovereign, Nadir Shah, himself of Turcoman origin, conducted a successful campaign against them a century later, and kept them in order during his lifetime; partly,

* Vámbéry's Lecture.

perhaps, because the nomads did not mind obeying a sovereign springing from their own race, and partly because he was a mighty warrior. At the close of the last century Aga Mahomed also carried the sword of Persia into their country, in a manner that tamed them for a while; but since then, if we except Abbas Meerza's subjugation of Sarakhs in 1832, Persia has done little or nothing to teach the Turcomans obedience, while her military reputation completely collapsed with the capture of 20,000 of her best troops by 5,000 Tekkes in 1861.

During the independent existence of Khiva and Bokhara, both those states managed to make their power felt among the Turcomans, not so much by the sword as by the fact that they afforded the nomads the only market for their slaves and plunder, and could, in some instances, by refusing to allow certain obnoxious clans to enter their boundaries to purchase provisions, reduce them almost to a condition of starvation. In Abbott's time (1840) it was calculated that there were 700,000 slaves in Khiva, of whom 30,000 were Persians, captured and sold by the Tekke and Yomood Turcomans. When Wolff visited Bokhara in 1844, there were 200,000 Persian slaves in the khanate. It is obvious that while the Turcomans had no interest in keeping on friendly terms with Persia, from which country they derived their slaves, they had the strongest reasons for maintaining friendship with the khanates of Khiva and Bokhara, where alone they could sell them. At the same time quarrels did occasionally occur between the Turcomans and the Uzbek states, chiefly from the exactions of the khans, and their

tyranny towards all who resided within the limits of their authority. Bokhara, engrossed with wars with Khokand and the khanates lying to the east and north of her, had rarely time to conduct expeditions against the Turcomans, and hence, beyond occasional conflicts with the Ersari and other tribes dwelling in the desert between Tchardjui and Balkh, her annals are free from Turcoman campaigns. Khiva, on the contrary, surrounded on all sides by nomad tribes, could only gratify her military instincts by making war upon the Turcomans, Kirghiz, or Kuzzacks, and thus we read of constant fighting between her khans and the Turcomans, and even of ambitious efforts to effect, from a temporary lodgment at Merv in 1833, a complete subjugation of North Khorassan and the region of the Atrek.*

Burnes' list of the Turcoman tribes in 1832 is still quoted by writers on Central Asia, and indicates the position and strength of them at that date.

Tribes.	Tents.
1. Tekke (of the Tedjend) - -	40,000
2. Ersari (of the Upper Oxus) -	40,000
3. Sarik (of Merv) - - -	20,000
4. Yomood (of Astrabad and Khiva)	20,000
5. Goklan (of the Goorgan) - -	9,000
6. Tchaudor (of Mangishlak) -	6,000
7. Salor (of Sarakhs) - - -	2,000
8. Sakar (of the Oxus) - - -	2,000
9. Ata (of the Balkan) - - -	1,000
Total of the race -	140,000

* In 1840, when Abbott visited Khiva, nearly half a million Turcomans paid tribute to the Khan, and furnished 25,000 horsemen for his army.

Reckoning to each tent five persons, as is done by the generality of Russian and English writers, we get a total of 700,000 people.

When Burnes visited the Turcoman region, the Tekkes were confined to Akhal and the Tedjend; the Ersaris were still tolerably independent of Bokhara; the Sariks were fighting the Khivans, who had temporarily occupied Merv; the Yomoods performed their periodical wanderings across the desert from Astrabad to Khiva and back again, and defied the might of Russia; the Goklans yielded an unwilling submission to Persia; the Tchaudors acknowledged the supremacy of Khiva; the Salors were about to undergo the dreadful siege of Sarakhs, which broke the power of their tribe, and made the city a Persian outpost; and the Sakar and Ata led an independent and insignificant existence in their respective camping places.*

Thirty years elapsed before another European made a fresh calculation of the numbers and power of each tribe. Vámbéry's journey was performed in 1863, just before Russia began that career of conquest which, in less than ten years, made her mistress of Khiva and Bokhara, and led to the subjugation of the powerful Yomood tribe. His list may be conveniently arranged as follows:—

Tribes.	Locality.	Tents.
1. Tekke	Akhal and Merv	60,000
2. Ersari	Unchanged	50,000
3. Yomood	,,	40,000
4. Goklan	,,	12,000

* Based upon the collective writings of travellers of the period.

Tribes.	Locality.	Tents.
5. Tchaudor-	More to the south	12,000
6. Sarik -	Upper Moorgab -	10,000
7. Salor -	Between Sarakhs and Merv - -	8,000
8. Alieli -	Andkhoi - -	3,000
2. Kara -	,, - -	1,500
		196,500 tents.
Total	- - -	982,500 souls.

In the interval the Salor, the oldest and noblest of the Turcoman tribes, had been ousted from Sarakhs by the Persians, and from Merv, where they had afterwards settled, by the Tekkes, and the latter had become the "greatest and most powerful tribe of the day." The Sariks had moved up the Moorgab from Merv towards Afghanistan, and had entered into friendly relations with the Djemshidi tribe, living near Herat. In other respects the condition of the tribes was unchanged, if we except the Tchaudors, who had moved more to the south, and further away from the Caspian, in order to escape the encroaching Russians. The Ata, described by Burnes as "the Sayids of the race, and said to be descended from the Caliph Osman," Vámbéry takes no notice of, nor does he recognise the existence of the Sakars. On the other hand, he brings forward the Kara and Alieli tribes, among whom he passed while journeying from Andkhoi, on the Oxus, to the city of Herat.

In 1878 Major-General Petroosevitch, the present Governor-General of Transcaspiana, explored Turkmenia and Khorassan, and the list which he has pub-

lished, besides being the latest, has the merit of being based on information derived during the numerous expeditions against the Turcomans undertaken by Russia since 1869. His list does not include all the Turcomans of the Khivan oasis.

Tribes.	Tents.
1. Tekke	80,000
2. Ersari	30,000
3. Yomood	35,000
4. Goklan	6,000
5. Tchaudor	omitted
6. Sarik	13,000
7. Salor (with Tekke)	
8. Kara (with Ersari)	
9. Sakar	3,000
10. Various	2,000
Total (incomplete)	169,000 tents.
	845,000 souls.

The following is a translation of Petroosevitch's account of the Turcomans, published at Tiflis in 1880:—

"On the borders of the Khivan oasis are the Yomoods of the Bairam-Shali division, who number from 15,000 to 20,000 tents. To the north of the Yomoods, and between them and the Uzbek population of the khanate of Khiva, are the Tchaudors. In the khanate of Khiva are to be found 2,000 Goklan families; 4,000 more of the same tribe wandering between the Atreck and Goorgan, and acknowledging allegiance to the Shah. Of the Turcomans of Khiva

it is unnecessary to speak. Experiencing devastation during the conquest of Khiva in 1873 they became pacified, if not effectually, at least for a very considerable period. Moreover, a mass of information respecting the Khivan Turcomans has been collected by the Turkestan authorities, and little new can be added by explorers from the Caspian. The reverse is the case with the Turcomans of the Persian border.

"Before dealing with these latter, we will make a few remarks about the Turcoman tribes occupying the left bank of the Amu Daria, from the Bokharan town of Tchardjui to the Afghan town of Khodja Sala. Fifteen miles above Tchardjui dwell the Sakar tribe, numbering 3,000 families. Twenty miles from them, higher up the river, are disposed the Sayat and Eski clans of the Tchaudor tribe (in the aggregate 200 families), and after these commence the thickly spread settlements of the Ersaris, stretching along the river to the Afghan frontier, and even traversing it. The Ersaris are divided into four great divisions :—

	Number of Tents.	Locality.
Kara -	20,000	Khodja-Koondooz
Ooloo-Tapa	20,000	Khalatch and Pelvart
Kooniash -	15,000	Zengi-Baba and Astan-Baba.
Bekaoul -	2,000	Boordalik, on the right side of the river, opposite Khodja - Koondooz.
In all -	57,000	

This number of tents, derived from verbal inquiries, appears to be excessive. At any rate, we may place it as being not less than 30,000 tents. The Sakars, Sayats, Eskis and Ersaris give tribute only to the extent of a *kokan* (6 pence) per tanap of land (7⅞ acres), the former three rendering ⅛ the harvest where the soil is irrigated direct from the irrigation canals, and ⅙ if the husbandmen have to use a wheel (tchigeri). The Ersaris are also bound to furnish horsemen in time of war. Russia has no relations with these people, who are separated from her southernmost Turkestan frontier by 240 miles of Bokharan territory. Sometimes they address themselves to the Turkestan authorities with demands for intercession on account of oppressions experienced; but, nevertheless, we have no regular intercourse with them, and if we take notice of their demands, it is only for the purpose of sustaining our influence in Central Asia.

"Along the shore of the Caspian Sea, near Krasnovodsk, on the islands of Tcheleken and Ogoortchensk, and on the Mangishlak peninsula live the Shiktsi (Shikhliari) Ogoordjalintsi, and Turcomans of various tribes, numbering in all 2,000 families, and owing allegiance to Russia. More to the south, alongside the Caspian, and to the north of the Goorgan, and also between that river and the Atrek, and to the north of the Atrek, are disposed the Yomoods of the Kara-Tchook division. The Yomoods, in the aggregate, are divided into two great divisions—the Bairam-Shali and Kara-Tchook. The first live all of them on the borders of the oasis of Khiva; the latter, with the exception of 1,000 kibitkas dwelling in

Khiva, have chosen the mouth of the Atrek and Goorgan as their home. Each of these two divisions is further sub-divided into larger or smaller sections, which, in their turn, are divided into branches (clans), and these latter into families.*

"*The Caspian Yomoods.*

"The Kara-Tchook Yomoods are divided into two branches, both large, the Sharif-Djafarbai and Ak-Atabai. As a rule, the terms Sharif and Ak are rarely used, the branches being spoken of simply as the Djafarbai and Atabai. Both inhabit the littoral of the Caspian sea.

"All Turcomans, irrespective of the tribe to which they belong, are divided into two classes:—the Tchomoor, or settled people, engaged in agriculture; and the Tcharva, or nomad cattle-breeders, wander-

* Vámbéry observes:—"According to our European ideas, we name the main divisions of the Turcomans, stocks, or tribes, because we start from the assumption of *one* entire nationality. But the Turcomans, who, as far as history records, never appear united in any single body, mark their principal races by the name Khalk (in Arabic *people*), and designate them as follows:—

I. Tchaudor.	IV. Kara.	VII. Tekke.
II. Ersari.	V. Salor.	VII. Göklan.
III. Alieli.	VI. Sarik.	IX. Yomood.

Employing, then, the expression adopted by these nomads themselves, and annexing the corresponding words and significations, we have:—

Turcoman words.	Primitive sense.	Secondary sense.
Khalk.	People.	Stock or tribe.
Taife.	People.	Branch.
Tire.	Fragment.	Lines or clans.

The Khalks are divided into Taife, and these again into Tire."

It is curious that Petroosevitch never quotes from, or ever refers to, Vámbéry in his articles on the Turcomans.—C. M.

ing from place to place with their camels, horses, and sheep. Each occupation is distinct, but none the less the two classes commingle, and it is not uncommon to find one brother a Tchomoor and the other a Tcharva. Nomad economy in general, and in the steppe in particular, demands a frequent change of locality; otherwise the cattle degenerate and become sickly. In consequence of this, the Djafarbai and Atabai migrate in the summer from the Atrek to the north: the former to the region adjacent to the Caspian and south of Balkan Bay (almost half-way between the head of that bay and the mouth of the Atrek); and the second to the country lying adjacent to the Sumbar, the principal tributary stream of the Atrek. In the winter the whole of the Kara-Tchook Yomoods migrate to Persian territory, where they group themselves between the extremities of the rivers Goorgan, Atrek, and Kara Su; the Djafarbai occupying the very coast of the Caspian, and the Atabai contiguous localities. The winter season, characterized in the Atrek region by rains, and rarely by snow and frost,* lasts four months, commencing in November and ending with the early days of March, when the Tcharva migrate to the steppes with their herds, leaving the Tchomoor still in their winter quarters. In this manner the Tcharva Yomoods of the Kara-Tchook division pass about eight months of the year on Russian territory to the

* "The cold rarely attains 6° or 7° Reaumur. The winter of 1877–78 was particularly severe, yet the frost did not exceed 7° Reaumur, and that only for a day or two, while the snow did not lay on the ground a week. This I was informed of by our consul at Astrabad, Gospodin Bakouline."—Petroosevitch.

north of the Atrek, and the remainder on Persian soil to the south of that river. Among the settled Tchomoor Yomoods, the Atabai occupy the tract between the Goorgan and Atrek and along the left bank of the Goorgan, while the Djafarbai live for the most part in large aouls to the north (right bank) of the Atrek, *i.e.* on Russian territory. The Djafarbai are Russian subjects: the Atabai, on the contrary, profess allegiance to the Shah.

"Life near the sea has led the Yomood Turcomans to take to the water as naturally as any littoral folk elsewhere. Ashore or afloat, however, the Turcomans are the same—inveterate robbers. From time to time they commit acts of piracy in the Bay of Astrabad, but only to a slight extent to-day. Not so long ago the Turcoman boats used to cruise about the Caspian, kidnapping our Ural and Astrachan fishermen and selling them as slaves. Even as recently as 10 years ago, two Russian sailors were freed from slavery in an aoul at the mouth of the Atrek. By degrees we tied the Turcomans, arms and legs, by occupying the east coast of the Caspian, from the Emba to the Atrek, and by establishing a naval station at Ashoorada. To-day the majority of them are fishermen, selling their fish at Krasnovodsk and Tchikishlar, and if a few steal at night into Astrabad Bay, and rob the people traversing the highway five miles inland, they never do so in larger bands than three or four, and derive no benefit from taking the Persians prisoners, since there exists no market for the disposal of them.

"The Yomoods are divided into the following branches or clans:—

"(Tchoni) Ak-Atabai.

"Branches: Ak-Atabai, Ak-Daz, Ak-Aimeer, Ak-Badrak, Ak-Eekdeer, Ak-Kadjak, and Ak-Kan-Youkmaz.

"(Sharif) Djafarbai.

"Branches: Sharif-Noorali and Sharif-Yarali.

"These two divisions are further sub-divided:—

"1. The Noorali into: Kelte, Karindjik, Kesh (Kazanlekor), Koyounlekor, Pang, and Devedji.

"2. The Yarali into: Ovnookh, Ovnookh-Toomadj, Kizil-Tchookhan, and Arrik-Sakkali.

"The following are their numbers:—

	Djafarbai.	Atabai.
"Tchomoor .	3,500 tents	2,500 tents.
"Tcharva . .	4,500 ,,	4,500 ,,
	8,000 tents	7,000 tents.

"Total of Yomoods . 15,000 tents.

"Of these, 9,000 kibitkas pass yearly eight months on the Russian side of the Atrek, and 1,000 more are permanent settlers on our territory; the remaining 5,000 do not cross the Atrek, and dwell always on Persian soil. These figures are derived from my own inquiries in North Persia, and from those of Consul Bakouline at Astrabad.

"*The Goklans.*

"To the east of the Yomoods, between the rivers Atrek and Goorgan, are disposed the Goklans, recognising the authority of the Shah, and paying a

yearly tribute of 6,000 Toomans (£3,000) to the ruler of the province of Budjnurd.

"Their branches and clans are as follows:—

"1. *Kayi*, living at the settlement of Karri-Kala, and in the Daroo defile; divided into the Bakadja, Moolla-Mamed, Daroo-Mamed, Tashek-Mamed, Yapagi-Mamed, Soovar-Mamed, Tashak-Mamed, Karnas-Mamed, Abshak-Mamed, and Taidar-Mamed; Erkekli-Sheikha-Takendji, Kaeek-Takendji, Saranli-Takendji, Tchikhlik-Takendji; Djan-Koorbanli, Deli, Karabalkhan-Arab, Keer, Karaliar, Khadji-Bai, Pashai, Tchootoor, Seegeer-Seekee, and Meerza-Bai.

"2. *Bayandeer*, living at the Nish-i-Kemer Pass; divided into the Kooroom, Shaitan, Tchoorrik, Kalaitchi, Koorik, and Yasaglik.

"3. *Keereek*, living at Medjevar-Tooka and Nooz; divided into the Gektche, Kara-Koozi, Sofian, Tameer, Karadja, Kava-Sakalloo, Daanai, and Karizli.

"4. *Ai-Dervish*, living at Kara-Sheikh; divided into the Ootchi, Kandjik, Tegen, Khoorte, Tchik, and Sari.

"5. *Tchakcer-Bek-Deli*, living at Mount Nal-Kookh, in Dakhan; divided into the Tchakeer, Tsaraoul, Kool-Kara, Koose, Pank, Aman-Khodja, Arab, Bainal, Boran, and Karishmal.

"6. *Yangak-Sagri*, living at the ruins of Goombesi-Kaoos, in the village of Sanger, belonging to the Khadjiliar (a family of the Yomood tribe); divided into Ak-Shoor,

Kara Shoor, Dizagre, Ongoot, Kooshtchi, Khar, and Gerkaz.*

"According to their own traditions the Goklans originated from two brothers: Dodourg and Ali-Dagli. From the first are derived the Bayandeer, Keereek, and Yangak Sagri; and from the second the remaining three branches.

"The total number of Goklans, based upon information collected by Gospodin Bakouline at Astrabad, is 4,000 families, although the ruler of Budjnurd reckons them only at 1,800. Bode estimated the total in 1852 at 2,500 families, but there can be no doubt that this was considerably below the mark. Blaramberg, who travelled in Persia in 1837–40, about the same time as Bode (1837 and 1848), places the figure at 9,000.† Bode also says that formerly the Goklans consisted of 12,000 tents, but that the number diminished owing partly to the vengeance exacted by the Khan of Khiva, who deported many of them to his dominions, and partly to the ill-treatment experienced by the Goklans at the hands of the Persian soldiers, invading, under the leadership of Mohamed Khan, their settlements along the Goorgan. This circumstance led to a large migration of Goklans to Khiva, so much so that of 9,000 families only 2,000 remained in the Goorgan region on the

* Vámbéry enumerates 10 Goklan *taife*, or branches. See his *Travels in Central Asia*.—C. M.

† Abbott, in 1840, put the total at 8,000; Burnes, in 1832, at 9,000; Ferrier, in 1845, at 12,000; and Vámbéry, in 1868, at 10,000. The Caucasian Government has been at work so many years collecting information on the spot about the Turcomans, that Petroosevitch's figures throughout are probably the best to rely upon.—C. M.

return of the Shah to his capital. Afterwards, the emigrants in Khiva, not finding the khanate to their liking, returned by degrees to the Goorgan, in spite of the cruelties inflicted by the Khan upon every Goklan found disobeying his orders to remain in the oasis.

"It has been said that the Eelkhani of Budjnurd calculates the number of Goklan families as low as 1,800. It is his interest to do so. Were the Teheran authorities aware of the existence of a larger number than this they would demand from him not 6,000 Toomans, the annual revenue received to-day, but a considerably larger sum, which would diminish the income of the Eelkhani. On this account his calculation cannot be relied upon. Moreover, it is below the lowest calculation of Bode, made 30 years ago, and in the interval the tribe must have slightly increased, since it has suffered neither from any devastating war nor epidemic.

"The Goklans occupy the undulating region between the foot of the Elburz and Kopet Dagh ranges, which is almost the most beautiful corner of the whole of northern Persia. It contains abundance of cultivable land, abundance of water, abundance of grass, abundance of forests. Baron Bode speaks in the most glowing terms of the Goklan settlements. In one place he says, 'Among all the Turcoman tribes Nature has been most bountiful to the Goklans. Land at the foot of mountains is incomparably more convenient for cultivation than that in valleys, and immensely more fertile. Streams, flowing from the mountains, and frequent rains, attracted to the mountains and

covering them with trees, give the Goklans water in abundance.' In another place he observes of the Goorgan, 'For the traveller who, like me, has spent many years in Central Persia, consisting of barren mountains and desert valleys, the northern slope of tha Elburz mountains, crowned with magnificent forests, and varied with delightful dales, watered by numerous streams and embellished with splendid vegetation, must possess a special charm. During my many and prolonged journeys in the East and West, I have never cast my eyes on a country equal in beauty to that of the Goorgan. There the loveliness of an English landscape blends with the grandeur of Caucasian scenery.' This glowing description is not exaggerated. The position of the Cis-Goorgan region, protected from the cold north and north-east winds by the mountains, and lying close to the sea, is favourable to the growth of the most luxuriant vegetation.

"In order to better explain the favourable position of the Goklan district, it may be well to give a topographical description of the adjacent region. From Krasnovodsk and Balkan Bay runs for 300 miles, in a straight line to the south-east, a long mountain crest, broken in two places. A part of the ridge between the first break and Balkan Bay, into which once ran the Amu-Daria, bears the name of the Great Balkan. The second part of the ridge, situated between the two breaks in the range, is known as the Little Balkan. Beyond the second break, further to the south, to half the entire length of the mountain system, the ridge is called the Kuren-Dagh. Finally, the remainder

of the more southerly part of the ridge bears the designation of the Kopet* Dagh, or Daman-i-Kuh. In this manner the chain of mountains stretching to the south-east from Krasnovodsk and Balkan Bay has, as far as the natural boundary of Kizil Arvat, two breaks and three designations; while the second part beyond Kizil Arvat consists entirely of an unbroken wall, with one title only. From the northern side of this mountain system stretches as far as the Ust Urt an immense desert, bounded on the north by the old branch of the Amu-Daria (Uzboi), on the east by the Oxus, and on the south, on one hand, by the final spurs of the Hindoo Koosh and Paropamisus ranges, and on the other, from the southern region of the Caspian Sea, by the Elburz range. One ramification of this range at Astrabad takes a north-easterly direction, and converges with the final part of the Kopet Dagh at the extreme northern border of Persia, near the province of Deregez.

"Between the Kopet Dagh and northern branch of the Elburz range and the Caspian Sea, is a rocky triangle, of which the apex is the connecting joint of the Kopet and Elburz ridges, the sides the two ridges referred to, and the base the eastern coast of the Caspian from Balkan Bay to the mouths of the Goorgan and Atrek. Of this triangle, the southern side (the Elburz ramification) is considerably higher than the northern (Kopet Dagh), and in general the whole of the country inside the triangle slopes from the apex and the sides towards the base —the Caspian Sea. From the southern side of the

* Petroosevitch spells the word throughout "Kopepet Dagh."—C. M.

triangle flows the Atrek, which, in piercing the Elburz ridge and entering the triangle, draws to itself all the streams flowing from the various sides of the triangle. The Atrek, after cutting through the Elburz, flows for a considerable distance away from that ridge, and in this abandoned expanse between the river and the Elburz, rise the two sources of the Goorgan, forming a junction after a while, and, together with the rest of the waters of that stream, entering the Caspian 15 miles to the south of the Atrek. Seventy-five miles before issuing into the Caspian the Atrek is joined from the north by the Sumbar, its largest tributary, whose outline serves as a sort of limit to the mountains. Beyond the Sumbar, in the direction of the Caspian, the ground is a little more undulating, but the further one proceeds west the smoother it becomes, until, in the end, it is a regular plain with occasionally insignificant mounds, having, however, no connection with one another. In this manner, the whole of the triangle described, at first rocky, with a considerable inclination towards the east, gradually descends towards the west, and then, from the confluence of the Sumbar with the Atrek (at Fort Tchat) to the Caspian Sea, is a complete plain. All the spurs of the Kopet Dagh, bounding the triangle on the north, extend almost in parallels from east to west, thus protecting every stream from the cold north and north-east air-currents. The ridge of the Kopet Dagh, notwithstanding its relatively feeble height, also serves throughout its whole extent as a protection against cold winds to the locality lying south of it.

"Such are the local conditions rendering the triangle between the Kopet Dagh and Elburz one of the most favoured spots in the world. There, rains and snows are common to the hills, while side by side the wastes stretching to the north of the Kopet Dagh are rarely visited by either. On this account the whole of the country on both sides of the Atrek, and in particular on the left side, between the Atrek and the Goorgan, contains every requisite for extensive agriculture. Rice grows there, and cotton, besides walnut and lemon trees, peaches and apricots, and even the sugar-cane. There also may be seen the ruins of important cities, such as, Djordjan, Goombed-i-Kaus, Meshed-i-Mesrian, and others. The last, in particular, claims especial notice. The ruins lie on a plain 30 miles to the north of the Atrek, and cover a large expanse of ground. Many buildings are still in a state of almost perfect preservation. To this town, lying so far from the river, water was, in ancient times, conveyed by a canal, known as the Mesto-Doauran canal, running from the Sumbar, and which may be traced to-day almost from one extremity to the other." Elsewhere Petroosevitch observes, in regard to Rawlinson's lecture on Merv before the Royal Geographical Society, 27th January 1879:—"Rawlinson makes the mistake of confounding Meshed-i-Mesrian (in Turcoman "Myast-Devran" or "Mestorian") with Moozderan, wishing to prove thereby that Meshed-i-Mesrian was the frontier of Iran and Turania."* A report of General

* For Petroosevitch's lengthy denial of this, and for his elaborate refutation of Sir Henry Rawlinson's statement that the Syr Daria

Lomakin in 1876 mentions that the ruins of Mestorian lie 36½ versts from Bugdaili and those of Meshed 5 versts beyond. The locality is very fruitful and grows still richer as one approaches the Atrek. The Turcomans say that in good seasons they succeed in securing harvests of corn 40 or 50 fold, maize 150 or 160 fold, and djugari 200 fold; such harvests are unknown in Khiva. Six versts above Tchat there is the first branch, and 4 versts higher up the Sumbar the second branch, of a canal running 65 versts to the ruins of Mestorian. The town anciently covered a square mile, and fruit-trees still testify to the orchards once existing there.* Petroosevitch concludes:—"Even in ancient times this region was famous for its beauty and richness. It bore the title of Degh-i-Stan (Happy Land), and was celebrated for the abundance of its wine and fruit, corn and honey.. Thus, Bode's description of the Goklan country is not exaggerated. But Bode visited the region from Astrabad, where the vegetation is still more profuse and on a more grandiose scale. Had he rode thither from the north, from the barren steppes of the Uzboi" (as Petroosevitch himself had done) "the enchantment would have been still greater. None the less, the whole of the expanse to the north of the Atrek, and to the east of the Sumbar to the very passes of the Kopet Dagh, is uninhabited, and presents the aspect of a

once ran into the Caspian, see *Transactions of the Caucasian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society*, No. 11, Tiflis, 1880.

* For an account of these ruins, see Conolly and Vámbéry's travels, and Rawlinson's lecture just referred to.—C. M.

hilly waste, dotted with the numerous remains of abandoned villages. Only two settlements are anywhere to be seen: Karri Kala and Nookhoor. All the rest have been destroyed by the Tekkes, the frightful scourge of all who do not belong to their tribe."

Deghistan—Happy Land—once "celebrated for the abundance of its wine and fruit, corn and honey," has been already annexed by Russia. The Goklan country adjoining, "almost the most beautiful corner of the whole of Northern Persia," is claimed by her Tiflis statesmen, and is rapidly passing under her sway. Eight years ago, Colonel Valentine Baker lifted his voice against these annexations, but he cried in vain. England still believes Russia is only annexing deserts beyond the Caspian.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEKKES OF AKHAL AND MERV.

Difference between Akhal and Merv.—The Heri Rood.—Water in Central Asia.—A fact for Mr. Darwin.—A description of Akhal.—Geok Tepe.—Distances in Akhal and Persia.—The rivers of Akhal.—An enumeration of the villages.—Askabat.—The clans of the Akhal oasis.—Population of Akhal.—Absorption phenomenon in Persia.—How the rivers disappear.—The cause of the desert character of the Turcoman region.—Can the Turcoman steppes ever be reclaimed?—The rise of the Akhal Tekkes.—The great migration to the Tedjend.—The advance upon Merv.—The Tekkes at Sarakhs.—The Sariks retire and the Salors are pushed towards Afghanistan.—Frightful character of the Tekke forays.—The great Persian defeat of 1861.—A Persian for a pound!—Absorption of the Salors.—The total number of Tekkes at Merv.—The great dam.—Immense increase of the tribe.—The clans at Merv.—Impending migration from Akhal.—The vicissitudes of the Sarik tribe.—The Turcomans and Afghanistan.—Sarik clans.—Pendjdeh.—A Persian raid.—Capture of 100,000 fat-tailed sheep.—Scenes on the way home.—The Salor tribe.—Three thousand carried away into bondage

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"The Tekke tribes, the most savage of all the Turcomans, who would not hesitate to sell into slavery the Prophet himself, did he fall into their hands."—VÁMBÉRY.

"The forays of the Tekkes extend a frightful distance from Merv."—GRODEKOFF.

"THE Tekkes * constitute the most powerful Turcoman tribe of to-day. They are divided, according to the locality they inhabit, into the Tekkes of Akhal and Merv. Akhal is a cultivable strip of land, stretching along the northern side of the Kopet Dagh, from its commencement at Kizil Arvat to its termination near the Persian province of Deregez. To the north of this cultivable zone lie sands, extending to the Uzboi. Bounded on the south-west by the mountains of the Kopet Dagh, and on every other side by sandy deserts, Akhal bears a strong resemblance to the oases of Central Africa.†

"The position of Merv is altogether different. Akhal lies at the foot of mountains, Merv at the extremity of a river. The Moorgab flows from the northern slopes of the Paropamisus ridge. Around Merv, as at Akhal, are also deserts, separating it on every side from every habitable spot. Along the Moorgab itself extend only the dwellings of the Turcomans, stretching to the spurs of the Paropamisus ridge, and at places separated from one another by many versts. The distance between

* This chapter, from beginning to end, is a translation word for word of General Petroosevitch's *Turcomans between the Old Bed of the Oxus and the North Persian Frontier*, published at Tiflis, 1880, but bearing the author's signature, June 1 (18), 1879.—C. M.

† The statement of Captain Napier, that the term Akhal is derived from one of the principal Tekke camps (*obas*), near which are the remains of a Persian city, is incorrect. Among the Tekkes, there is no tribe or clan calling itself Akhal. The term is evidently an old one, like Merv and Tedjend; and the Tekkes migrating thither found the name ready, and employed it to signify the Tekkes living in Akhal—Akhal Tekkes. It is also incorrect that the principal settlement of the Akhal Tekkes is Akhal—the greater number of the Akhal Tekkes are to be found at Geok Tepe, or more truly, between Geok Tepe and Askabat.—PETROOSEVITCH.

Gyaoors, the last of the Akhal settlements towards the east, and Merv, on the Moorgab, *i.e.* between the two oases occupied by the Tekkes, is 150 miles. This interval does not contain a single settlement, notwithstanding that through the middle of it flows the Heri Rood, known to the Turcomans as the Tedjend or the Sarakhs Daria. The Heri Rood takes its rise in the Paropamisus range, and after flowing alongside the ridge in a straight direction towards the west for 300 miles, turns at right angles to the north. At the beginning of the turn the river breaks through the spurs of the Paropamisus and Elburz ranges, and then escapes to the desert, between Merv and Akhal, wasting its waters upon a swamp. Forty years ago the Merv Tekkes lived alongside the river Heri Rood, at Oraz Kala, 60 miles from the final point of Akhal, but the Persians devastated their settlements as a punishment for raiding into Khorassan, and since then no colony has been established between Merv and Akhal. Occasionally the Turcomans of Merv drive their flocks and herds to the pastures of the Heri Rood, but the Persians always chase them if they do, and take their sheep and camels from them; hence the Merv Tekkes rarely visit the Heri Rood with their herds.

"In the steppes of Central Asia, as also in the deserts of Africa and Australia, water is the Alpha and Omega of everything. Without water existence is impossible, and thus in the wastes to the north of Akhal and Merv neither birds nor beasts are to be found. Only where there are wells may be observed a few small members of the feathered race,

fluttering about the well-tops in quest of water. The wells are sometimes very deep" (rarely less than 30 feet.—Burnes) "nevertheless, the birds fly right down them for water, and this fact, unknown elsewhere where abundance of water exists, may be witnessed at every well in the desert.

"Akhal derives water from the numerous brooks and rivulets flowing from the northern declivity of the Kopet Dagh. The south-east portion of the Kopet Dagh is considerably higher than the north-west, near Kizil Arvat; moreover, towards the south-east it conforms itself to the higher chain of mountains of the Elburz ridge, which at the connecting point of Khezar-Mesdjid is more than 10,000 feet above the level of the sea. On this account, the streams flowing from the northern slope of the Kopet Dagh are larger at the Gyaoors end than at the Kizil Arvat extremity, and hence the population is denser at the former point than at the latter. Kizil Arvat constitutes the extreme north-west settlement of Akhal. From it the Tekke villages, or fortresses, —every settlement having a clay-walled fort for its defence—stretch first in a single line, and then in two or more ranks to Askabat, lying close to the eastern extremity of the oasis, and almost at the end of the Kopet Dagh. East of Askabat there are only two settlements—Annaoo and Gyaoors. The latter is the final settlement of Akhal towards the east. In this manner, the entire oasis runs for 187 miles from one end to the other. Its breadth is not more than 15 to 25 miles at the extremities, and 45 in the centre. In the middle portion is situated the settlement of Geok Tepe—the centre of all Akhal,

containing the most influential of the Tekkes, and offering a base for the more important raids. There, also, take place the conferences of the Akhal Tekkes, and the discussions affecting, if not all the oasis, at least the major portion of it.

"The number of villages in Akhal amounts to about 50.* It is difficult to obtain particulars about these, or even to decide their exact position, owing to the reticence of the Tekkes, and the confusion arising from the different standards employed in defining the distances between the various settlements. The Persian *farsakh* varies from four to five miles, according to the locality; the *farsakh* or *agatch* of the Kurds living along the Turcoman frontier is 7½ miles in length, which is also about the distance of the Tekke standard. If a traveller calculates the distance in Persian *farsakhs* he is sure to fall into error, and if he tries to change the local *farsakhs* into Persian he will hardly escape making blunders, as the natives often calculate the distance between two stages less by the actual length of the road than by the difficulties attending the journey. Thus the number of *farsakhs* between two points across a mountain is always greater than it would be if the localities were situated upon a plain.

"From the northern declivity of the Kopet Dagh, at the south-eastern extremity of the ridge, flow the rivers Gez Bashi, Kotoor, Feerooze, Kargi-Su, and Gyamaoo. The upper course of the Feerooze and

* Arsky, in the *Disastrous Russian Campaign against the Turcomans*, enumerates 28 forts and 35 undefended villages; in all 53 settlements. He and the other Russian correspondents give a complete description of Akhal as far as Geok Tepe.—C. M.

Gyamaoo is made use of by the Kurds of the Persian province of Kuchan; the lower part provides water for the Tekkes, in the same manner as the three other streams enumerated.

"Along these streams are disposed the following Tekke villages:—At the issue of the Gez Bashi from the mountains lies the settlement of Bageer, with 200 dwellings, belonging to the Gektche clan. Beyond this settlement the river, which contains an abundant supply of water, splits itself into five branches. One branch flows to the village of Karri-Kala, containing 700 dwellings belonging to the Yasman, Salik, Mirish, and Tchaltak clans. Below Karri-Kala, at the extremity of the channel, is the village of Mirava, with 150 dwellings of the Yasman clan. Beyond Mirava the channel becomes exhausted, all the water having been used up in irrigation. The second branch flows to the settlement of Desht-i-Kiptchak, or, as it is usually called, Kiptchak, with 600 dwellings of the Kongoor clan. The third branch waters the village of Gektche, containing 700 Gektche families. The fourth courses through the village of Geshi, comprising 1,000 dwellings; and, finally, the fifth channel flows to Askabat, containing 2,000 families.

"Askabat, if not the largest, is one of the most important of the Akhal settlements. Its inhabitants are dispersed among eight separate villages, or fortresses, very close to one another. In this manner the river Gez Bashi alone, flowing from the south-east extremity of the Kopet Dagh, designated locally the Giuluil Dagh, waters six settlements of Akhal with an aggregate population of 5,350 families.

"The river Kotoor, flowing west of the Gez Bashi, runs to the two villages of Bizmeen, each containing 1,000 dwellings and inhabited, the former by the Karadash-Ayak clan, and the latter by the Ak-Dash-Ayak.

"The river Feerooze, on issuing from the defile dividing the upper part of its valley from the lower, flows towards the villages of Bab-Arab (100 families) and Eezgan (with 600).

"To the west of these villages, on the river Kargi-Su, taking its rise in the mountains between the rivers Feerooze and Gyamaoo, lie four settlements:—Koordjoo, with 700 families of the Kara-Kongoor clan; Shor Kala, with 500 of the Gektche; Emishan, with 100 of the Aman-Shah; and Kyalyadjar, with 80 of the Gektche. The river Kargi-Su, on quitting the mountains, passes first alongside the ruins of the ancient Persian village of Khoormen before touching the four settlements above mentioned. To the west of these settlements, on the river Gyamaoo, lies the village of Yangi-Kala, containing 700 families of the Sitchmez, Kakshal, and Bookree clans, dispersed among five distinct settlements.

"To the north-west of Yangi-Kala, at the foot of the Kopet Dagh, are disposed the following minor settlements:—Keliate, with 40 families of the Kara Youmai clan; Karagan, with 40 families of the Kadjook (?) clan; Barzan, with 50 families of the Kakshal clan; and Dooroon, with 40 families of the Ak-Dash-Ayak clan. These hamlets do not lie along a single river, but are situated upon the banks of insignificant streams, whose paucity of water is the cause of the smallness of the settlements.

"Further to the west, on a plain to the north of the Kopet Dagh, at the extremities of the rivers on which are situated the villages above enumerated, are a number of Tekke settlements, of which we have no particulars. All we know is, that near the settlement of Geok Tepe, lying 45 miles to the north-west of Askabat, are grouped not less than 8,000 families.

"To the east of Askabat are yet two more Tekke settlements: Annaoo, with 200 families, and Gyaooars, with 600; the first lying at the end of the river Kelte Tchinar, issuing from between the extremity of the Kopet Dagh range and the commencement of the Zar-i-Kuh ridge, which serves as a sort of continuation of the Kopet Dagh; and the second on a stream flowing from the northern slope of the Zar-i-Kuh.

"In this manner, in the 22 settlements enumerated dwell 11,000 families, which, with the 8,000 grouped at Geok Tepe, gives a total of 19,000. As, however, barely half the actual number of villages are included in this list, it is probably not an exaggeration to calculate the entire population of Akhal at 30,000 families. Some persons give a higher total; for instance, 40,000 tents,* while others reduce this figure to 15,000. But judging from the facts given, and from numerous inquiries, we may decide that the total is not far under 30,000 families.

* A reason for the total of 40,000 constantly mentioned by writers in their estimates of the Tekke and other tribes, may be easily given. In Central Asia, the term Kyrk-ming (Toorkee for 40,000), is generally used as an indefinite expression for a great number. Regarding the Akhal Tekkes, Blaramberg, in his *Statistical Survey of Persia*, calculates their number in 1840 at 25,000 families; they must

"From the general description given of the locality inhabited by the Akhal Tekkes, it may be observed that the whole of their settlements lie alongside rivers at the northern foot of the Kopet Dagh, having in front of them an immense sandy desert, stretching away far to the north. The dryness of the atmosphere in Central Asia in general, and of the sandy wastes lying between the Caspian and Aral in particular, is so great, that evaporation alone is sufficient to destroy mountain streams of great magnitude. Rivulets become absorbed by the process of filtration.

"In the mountains of Persia absorption is greater than anywhere else. In consequence of this phenomenon the mountains are bare of forests and vegetation; masses of rock, detached from the heights, clog the course of the streams, and form huge porous deposits, eminently adapted for the passage of water. As a natural result, all brooks and streams not possessing a large volume of water disappear beneath the surface at a very short distance from their source. This phenomenon is largely responsible for the dryness of the atmosphere, since it deprives the air of the humidity which would otherwise pass into it, were the streams longer in their course. These two natural causes are sufficient of themselves to explain the narrowness of the zone of Akhal. The streams rapidly evaporate or become absorbed after

have largely increased since. Arsky, in the *Disastrous Campaign*, computes the total at 20,000. The account of the Turcoman region from Tchikishlar and Krasnovodsk to Geok Tepe, in the same work, is the only complete one extant, either in English or Russian. It should be read side by side with Petroosevitch's description of the region lying between Geok Tepe and Merv.—C. M.

leaving the Kopet Dagh, and, beyond the points where they disappear, the burning sands exercise complete dominion.

"Undoubtedly, in former times, when the mountain-tops of the Kopet Dagh were clad with forests, and the river Amu Daria coursed along its ancient channel into the Caspian Sea near Krasnovodsk, the greater part of the streams, if not the whole of them, must have flowed to the Amu Daria, or else to the Heri Rood, which latter fell into the Amu Daria to the north of Akhal. With the destruction of the forests, however, the dryness of the air increased, the volume of the streams diminished, and the Heri Rood decreased in size. The latter river ceased to approach the Uzboi channel of the Oxus, and the streams failed to get further than the steppes, which at once were encroached upon by the sands. In spite of all this, the rivers of Akhal would be longer to-day, and the oasis zone broader, but for the dispersion of the streams in their course, due to their employment in irrigation. The rainlessness of Central Asian wastes allows vegetation to flourish only where there is artificial irrigation. On this account, with the formation in Akhal of settlements depending exclusively upon irrigation for the culture of their fields, the strength of the streams began to diminish, and, as a consequence, they retreated further and further to the south, *i.e.* to the foot of the Kopet Dagh, and became what we find them to be to-day.

"According to the statements of the rulers of Budjnurd and Kuchan, the Tekkes occupied Akhal 163 years ago, in the reign of Shah Tahmasp, and

up to the beginning of the present century they limited themselves to the boundaries of the oasis. The growth of the population and the impossibility of increasing the size of the oasis, owing to the limited supply of water, then compelled them to seek cultivable land elsewhere. It must be obvious that, with the growth of the population in Akhal, there must have been an increase of cultivation, and consequently of irrigation. This inevitably led to a drain upon the water-supply, and in this manner the northern and southern borders of Akhal grew closer together. In a word, the limitation of water, owing to the conditions enumerated, involved a limitation of population, and there arose a point beyond which the population could not safely increase. We have reason to believe that this point was reached about the year 1830. At any rate, at that period a large number of Tekkes, under the leadership of Oraz Khan, migrated to the mouth of the river Heri Rood, 60 miles, as the crow flies, east of Gyaoors, the present final point of Akhal. Oraz Khan, arriving at the Heri Rood, constructed on the right bank Fort Tedjend, or Oraz Kala, in consequence of which the whole of the river from Sarakhs to the new settlement became known as the Tedjend Daria.*

"The Tekkes had always been rascals and thieves. While they lived in Akhal they pillaged northern Persia, where the frontier provinces of Deregez, Kuchan, and Budjnurd now are; and with their arrival at the Tedjend they began to overrun the north-

* According to Blaramberg, the number of Tedjend Tekkes was 10,000 families.—P.

east provinces of Persia. The Governor of Khorassan, Asifood-Dowlah-Alla-Yar-Khan, soon lost his patience at these inroads. Collecting an army, he fell upon the Tedjend Tekkes about the year 1845, and completely destroyed their settlements. The Tekkes fled to Akhal, but the scarcity of water and cultivable soil rendered their stay there impossible, and Oraz Khan, with other delegates, therefore proceeded to Khorassan, and begged permission of Asifood Dowlah to migrate to Old Sarakhs, on the right bank of the Heri Rood, and establish settlements in its vicinity. At that time the region adjacent to Old Sarakhs, on both sides of the river, was bare of population, the Salor Turcomans* having been crushed in 1833 for their predatory habits by Abbas Meerza, son of Feteh Ali Shah, after the suppression of the revolt in Kuchan. The Salor Turcomans paid this prince a contribution of 35,000 Toomans, and gave hostages; besides which, according to Blaramberg, vast numbers were killed or wounded during the siege and capture of Sarakhs. The remnant of the tribe fled to Youletan, on the Moorgab; and the valley of the Heri Rood, near Sarakhs, became a waste.

Asifood Dowlah, accepting hostages from the Tekkes, gave them permission to migrate to Old Sarakhs. At first the new comers lived peaceably with the Persians, directing their forays towards the north, against Khiva and Bokhara, and the Sarik and Salor tribes, old enemies of theirs. The ruler

* Russians call the Salor tribe the "Saleeri." The Tekkes they designate "Tekintsi."—C. M.

of Khiva then was the celebrated Mahomed Emin Khan, or, as he was more curtly called by the Khivans, Medemi-Khan. This sovereign fell upon the Tekkes, crushed them, and placed a viceroy in Sarakhs, with 500 troops. After his return to Khiva the Tekkes rose in revolt, massacred the viceroy and all the troops, and recommenced their forays. In 1855 Medemi-Khan again marched against Sarakhs. A few encounters took place, and in the end the Khivans were completely defeated, and had to seek safety in flight. Medemi-Khan himself, with his suite, was surrounded on a mound on the right bank of the Heri Rood, where he had taken up a position to watch the battle, and the entire party were put to the sword; the head of the Khan being sent to Feteh Ali Shah at Teheran, and the body to Khiva for burial.

"After this the Tekkes at Sarakhs grew bolder, and plundered not only Bokharans, Khivans, and Sariks living at Merv, but also Persians dwelling in every part of Khorassan. The province at that time was in a state of revolt, Salar, son of Asifood Dowlah, having seized the reins of power on the death of his father, and endeavoured to sever Khorassan from Persia. The authority of Salar, however, did not continue long. In 1856 Meshed, the chief city of Khorassan, was taken by the Persians, and Salar executed. The new ruler, Fermoon-Ferma-Feridoon-Meerza, decided upon the subjugation of the Turcomans, including not only the Tekkes, but the Sariks also, the latter having occupied Merv in 1787, after the destruction of the city by the Emir Murad of Bokhara, and persistently plundered the eastern

border of Khorassan. The campaign was successful. The Tekkes of Sarakhs were conquered, the Persians penetrated to the Sarik stronghold at Merv, and returned with 150 families as hostages. On his way home Feridoon died, and was succeeded by the Sultan Murad-Meerza-Khissamus-Sultanai. The campaign of Feridoon was soon forgotten by the Tekkes, and they again recommenced their forays.

"Enraged at the irrepressibility of the Tekkes, the Sultan Murad decided to annihilate them. About 1856 he advanced upon Sarakhs, burnt all the settlements of the Tekkes, and compelled them to flee for refuge to Merv. But the Sariks living there were enemies of the Tekkes, and encountered them with the sword. The Tekkes tried to drive out the Sariks. The latter, being weaker, applied for help to the Sultan Murad, then returning from Herat, which he had besieged and taken in 1857. The Sultan Murad collected 18 battalions of infantry, and 7,000 or 8,000 cavalry, and marched in the autumn to Merv. At first the Tekkes tried their hardest to prevent a junction between the Persians and the Sarik Turcomans, but, after many futile efforts, they were compelled to retreat, and subsequently sent in proffers of submission. The Sultan, deceived by their expressions of repentance, but, above all, by their gifts, retired from Merv at the end of three months, without even taking a single hostage. Immediately his back was turned the struggle between the Tekkes and the Sariks recommenced, ending in the defeat of the latter, who were compelled to evacuate Merv and the lower course of the Moorgab, and retire to the higher part of the river, at Youletan and Pendj-

deh, driving, in their turn, from those places, the Salor tribe. The Salor Turcomans chose as their new home, with the permission of the Persian authorities, the ruins of Zoor-Abad, lying on the left bank of the river Heri Rood, 90 miles to the west of Sarakhs.

"From that moment the Tekkes were masters of Merv, and have remained so since. Twenty miles above Merv they constructed a dam, and ran out from the river irrigation canals, for the purpose of adapting the oasis to the requirements of agriculture. Their forays became more extended and more terrible. They overran the whole of north-east Khorassan and the northern parts of Afghanistan. They even carried devastation to the district of Kaine, 450 miles south of Meshed and 750 from their own black dwellings in the valley of the Moorgab.

"To put a stop to these raids, once for all, the Persians decided a second time to invade Merv, and annihilate the Tekkes. As a preliminary to the invasion they erected, in 1860, on the left bank of the Heri Rood, opposite Old Sarakhs, a fort which they designated New Sarakhs. The following year their army advanced, *viâ* Sarakhs, consisting of 12,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry, and 33 guns. So sure were the invaders of victory that the commander-in-chief, Khamze-Meerza Khishmetood Dowlah, and the chief of his staff, Meerza-Mamed-Kavamood-Dowlah-Ashtiani, absolutely refused to accept the offer of 1,000 families as hostages, and 1,000 horsemen as irregular cavalry from the Tekkes, together with a miscal of gold (11*s.*) per tent as an indemnity, and declared their intention of wiping them off the face of the earth.

"The Tekkes thereupon had no other alternative than to fight for their lives. Numerous conflicts took place, ending unfavourably for the Persians. At last the troops began to retreat. The day afterwards, they were overwhelmingly defeated by the Turcomans. Those who had means of escape fled the scene of slaughter, but the infantry and artillery were killed or captured to a man. The victors collected so many prisoners that they did not know what to do with them. A ready market for slaves existed in Khiva and Bokhara, but the prisoners poured in in such abundance that the price of a Persian captive fell to a pound. After this disaster the Shah ceased to think of the conquest of Merv, and confined his attentions to the safe-guarding of the frontier. The Tekkes, on their part, became completely independent. Up to the defeat of the Khivan and Persian armies, they had been accustomed to call themselves alternatively the subjects of the Shah or the Khan, whichever power happened, for the moment, to threaten them the most. They now declared themselves independent of both. Their forays became more frightful. They spread themselves over the whole of north-east Khorassan. Eight years ago they led into slavery 2,000 Salor families, living at Zoor-Abad. Taking them by surprise, they captured all their herds and many families, and then invited the remainder of the Salors to follow them and receive the prisoners; threatening, otherwise, to put the latter to the sword. The Salors accepted the invitation, and followed the Tekkes to Merv, where they were dispersed in groups of 10 to 20 families among the various clans.

"In this manner the insufficiency of cultivable soil in Akhal, or, more correctly, the insufficiency of water, by compelling a portion of the population to emigrate from the oasis, led to the Tekkes becoming masters, in the course of 30 years, of the country at the extremity of the Moorgab, after gradually dislodging the whole of their antagonists and destroying two armies sent thither to chastise them by Khiva and Persia.

"The number of Tekkes at Merv, according to information derived by means of verbal inquiries, is tolerably large, being not far short of 50,000 kibitkas, or 250,000 souls. This figure is founded upon calculations sufficiently worthy of belief. To irrigate their lands, the Tekkes early constructed a dam across the Moorgab, or, as the Turcomans call it, the Merv Daria; and from the river extended out a series of 24 canals. The Tekkes distributed themselves equally on either side of the river, and each excavated 12 canals, thus dividing the water into two equal distributions. Every year the canals require to be repaired and cleansed. Each canal is repaired by the people making use of it, or rather, every Tekke drawing water from a canal is bound to contribute labour towards its good preservation. For this purpose every 24 families yearly contributes one labourer, 1,000 being furnished by the Tokhtamish division of the Tekkes on the right bank of the Moorgab, and 1,000 by the Otamish division on the opposite side of the river—2,000 men in all being yearly employed in repairing the dam. Multiplying 2,000 by 24 we obtain a total of 48,000 families living in the oasis of Merv.

"How to definitely explain this rapid increase of the Tekkes of Merv, who in 1830, when they lived on the Tedjend, numbered only 10,000 families, is at present an impossibility; but it may be conjectured that the growth is due partly to the natural development of the population in the course of 50 years, and partly to the continued influx of emigrants from Akhal, where the limitation to the increase of population still prevails. Moreover, the Merv Tekkes have constantly increased their numbers by slaves and their children, annexing, at a stroke, eight years ago, 2,000 families of the Salor tribe. Finally, it is open to doubt whether the calculation made in 1830 was a reliable one. There may have been more than 10,000 Tekkes living in those days on the Tedjend. At any rate, 48,000 families live in the oasis of Merv at the present moment, if we are to accept for our guidance calculations based on the number of labourers yearly employed in repairing the dam.

"From the above description it will be seen that the Tekkes of Akhal and Merv are one and the same Turcoman tribe, occupying two oases through the force of circumstances beyond their control. The Tekkes, like the rest of the Turcoman tribes, are split up into divisions, branches, and clans, as under:—

"Divisions: Tokhtamish and Otamish.

"Branches of the Tokhtamish division: Bek and Vekeel.

"Branches of the Otamish division: Sitchmez and Bakshi.

"Clans of the Tokhtamish division of the Bek

branch: Gektche, Aman-Shah, Khar, and Kongoor. Sub-divided as follows:—

" (*a.*) *Gektche*: Yari-Gektche, Kara-Gektche, Taimas, and Medjek.

" (*b.*) *Aman-Shah*: Kaookoo, Zering, and Ageer-Bash.

" (*c.*) *Khar*: Khar itself, and Yakoob.

" (*d.*) *Kongoor*: Kara-Kongoor, and Ak-Kongoor.

" Clans of the Tokhtamish division of the Vekeel branch: Ak-Vekeel and Kara-Vekeel. Sub-divided as follows:—

" (*a.*) *Ak-Vekeel*: Tchashkhin, Khara-Yousoup, Yazi, Kandjik, Kara-Youmai, and Kharoon.

" (*b.*) *Kara-Vekeel*: Areek, Karadja, Khaleel, Kara, Bookri, and Kakshal.

" Clans of the Otamish division of the Sitchmez branch: Ootchrook, Perreng, Kara-Ahmed, Topooz, Ebai, and Mirish.

" Clans of the Otamish division of the Bakshi branch: Vanesh, Zeyakeer, Gek, Sultan-Aziz, and Borkhoz.

" These divisions of the Tekke community apply as much to Akhal as to Merv, because in both oases live members of one and the same clan, and even brothers.

" In Akhal, as well as at Merv, failures of the harvest, and even famines, occur from the lack of spring rains or the deficiency of snow during the winter, both leading to a more rapid disappearance of the rivers in the sands. But the population of Akhal

is more settled than that of Merv, owing to the inhabitants having lived longer in one place. All the villages or fortresses of Akhal are situated in gardens, which extend for a considerable distance around them. None the less the deficiency of water renders periodical migration imperative. Such a movement took place 50 years ago, when a number of Akhal Tekkes migrated to the Tedjend. It is not too much to expect that a second is imminent to-day, unless the natural increase of population has been checked by disease or famine.

"*The Sarik and Salor Tribes.*

"To the south-east of Merv, higher up the Moorgab, wander the Sarik Turcomans. This tribe occupies two localities along the river. One place, Pendjdeh (Five Villages) lies at the foot of a branch of the Paropamisus range, giving rise to the important river Kara Tepe, which enters the Moorgab at Pendjdeh; and the other, Youletan, is situated 75 miles further down the river. The Sarik tribe migrated from Merv after the arrival of the Tekkes; but in 1832, when Burnes visited the oasis, they were again masters of the place. To-day they occupy at Youletan settlements previously belonging to the Salor tribe, together with lands at Pendjdeh originally in the possession of the Afghan nomad tribes—the Djemshidis and Taeemoors. The Sariks compelled the latter to withdraw, and at present there are no people owing allegiance to the Afghan Ameer living along the northern ridge of the Paropamisus range between the Heri Rood and the Kara Tepe, the affluent of the river Moorgab. The Djemshidi settle-

ments commence only on the southern side of the Paropamisus, although in the summer the Djemshidi shepherds drive their sheep to the northern slope, to the upper course of the Kara Tepe, where they pasture them side by side with the flocks of the Sarik Turcomans, arriving thither from Pendjdeh.

"The Sarik tribe has five divisions: Kherzegi, Kharasanli, Alyasha, Sookhti, and Bairatch. These are further sub-divided as under:—

"1. *Kherzegi*: Soyounali, Kuldja, Kadjali-Keezel, Beden, and Kanli Bash.
"2. *Kharazanli*: Kazandji and Mamatai.
"3. *Alyasha*: Oostelet and Annish.
"4. *Sookhti*: Dagdi-Kooli and Erden.
"5. *Bairatch*: Djani Bek, Erki, Gooram, and Sidlich.

"All these branches live at Youletan and Pendjdeh.

"The total number of the tribe is about 13,000 families, equally divided between the two localities mentioned. This figure is based upon the calculations of the Sariks themselves. Dams exist both at Youletan and Pendjdeh, for the purpose of stemming the river water and diffusing it through large irrigation canals into smaller channels. The smaller canals are called 'paikals,' and usually supply water to 12 families; each drawing it from a separate branch. Sometimes a branch serves for two families, but generally it furnishes water only to one, and we may thus strike the average at 12. Each large irrigation canal has 28 or 30 paikals, or smaller channels, issuing from it; thus the number of families deriving

water from a large irrigation canal is from 336 to 360. Eighteen such canals exist at Youletan and Pendjdeh, and, hence, at both places live from 6,048 to 6,480 families, or together about 12,000 or 13,000 families.

"The Sariks living at Youletan are compelled, *bon gré mal gré*, to keep on good terms with the Tekkes, living as the latter do in large numbers only 40 miles distant. Still, a hostile feeling exists between the two tribes, and in the event of misfortune occurring to the Tekkes the Sariks would eagerly seize any opportunity of inflicting injury upon the tribe. The Sarik Turcomans dwelling at Pendjdeh, further away from Merv, live in a state of open warfare with the Tekkes. Conflicts between masses of tribesmen do not occur as a rule, but petty raids against one another are none the less frequent.

"The Sariks, in consequence of the development of cattle-breeding among them, are tolerably rich. Their sheep belong to a special breed, distinguished by their size from those of other Central Asian peoples. From specimens observed by myself in Khorassan, the Sarik sheep, if anything, are a trifle larger than the Kirghiz and Kalmuck breeds. Camels too exist in large numbers, and are exclusively pastured on the northern spurs of the Paropamisus ridge, along the river Kara Tepe. In 1877 the Sariks at Pendjdeh had the misfortune to lose 100,000 sheep, swept away at a stroke by a Persian force sent to retaliate for a raid, which the tribe had conducted in the spring against the district of Toorbet-i-Sheikh-i-Djam, whence they had returned with 30,000 sheep and many prisoners. In spite of this loss the Sariks have such immense numbers of sheep remain-

ing that the flocks will right themselves again in the course of a few years.

"Before closing my description of the Sarik tribe, it might be interesting to give some particulars about the Persian raid in question.

"The raid to Pendjdeh was conducted at the express command of the Shah, transmitted by telegraph. The Shah had a telegraph apparatus in his palace. A decree was first issued, threatening with death any telegraph clerk disclosing intelligence transmitted by wire. The Shah well knew that the Sarik Turcomans would pay handsomely for a word of warning, and hence threatened in particular the telegraph clerks at Meshed, who, as elsewhere in Persia, made a regular practice of selling the contents of their messages. Fear deprived the officials almost of their reason; not a tongue was allowed to wag in Khorassan. By the end of a month two battalions of infantry and 2,000 cavalry had assembled at Toorbet-i-Sheikh-i-Djam, under the command of Meer Pandja. Nobody knew, to the last moment, the destination of the column; the very point of assembly serving as a mask to the expedition, because it would have required a wise head to guess that the Persians meant to march to Pendjdeh.

"The troops marched out of the place together, but at the second stage the cavalry pushed on ahead, leaving the infantry to follow to cover their retreat. Crossing the Heri Rood, the infantry reached Goolran, traversing 40 or 50 miles without water. At Goolran there is an abundant supply obtainable from a spring, distant 40 or 50 miles from the Sarik encampments. The cavalry marched from Goolran

to the outside encampments of the Sariks, on the river Kara Tepe, in two days; then splitting into two columns, seized many flocks of sheep, and more than a hundred shepherds. Had they pushed on further, and penetrated to the midst of the Sarik settlement, they might have captured there a larger number of sheep and camels. But the Persians are such cowards that, having seized all the sheep they could find on the edge of the Sarik district, they turned back home at once, driving a flock of 100,000 sheep before them. Many of the animals, pressed together by the cavalry, trod the weaker ones to death; others were killed by the horsemen, who, like wolves, flung themselves upon the flock, cut off the fatty parts of the sheep, and threw away the mutilated beasts to perish. Nearly all the cavalry filled their forage sacks with tail-tallow in this manner; but the August heat was so intense, that by the time they had reached the Heri Rood the fat had turned sour, and they had to throw it away. On their way to the river the flock was further thinned by want of grass and water; the latter of which was so scarce at one moment that the cavalry were seriously threatened with death by thirst. Arrived at the stream of Goolran (in Turcoman, 'Goorlian') the 65,000 remaining sheep were divided into flocks of 1,000 each, driven by infantry soldiers instead of horsemen. For his share the ruler of Khorassan received 10,000 sheep; Meer Pandj, the commander, 6,000; his brother—who commanded a battalion—2,000; the chiefs of the cavalry respectively, 1,000, 2,000, and 3,000 a piece; and the soldiers two or three per man. The latter, how-

ever, in very few instances received the plunder assigned to them, their chiefs seizing as much as they could; while, finally, nobody seems to have thought at all of giving any of the captured sheep to the people of Toorbet-i-Sheikh-i-Djam, whose loss of 30,000 sheep by the Sarik foray had been the cause of the counter-raid to Kara Tepe.

"The last of the Turcoman tribes living on the Persian border is the Salor,* which lost its independence in 1871. In 1830 the Salors lived at Sarakhs, but their settlements were destroyed by Abbas Meerza in 1833, in punishment for their frightful forays into Persia. From Sarakhs they fled at first to the Moorgab, and thence, 20 years ago, with the consent of the Persian authorities, migrated to Zoor Abad, where they lived in peace 12 years. For some reason or other, they grew tired of Zoor Abad, and with the permission a second time of Persia, returned with their herds to their original settlements at Sarakhs. There they had not been three months when the Tekkes one night fell upon them, and carried off all their flocks, with the owners as well. The Persian garrison at Sarakhs had hardly time to look about them when the Tekkes had disappeared from sight. They might easily have pursued them and recovered some of the booty, but such a step was not to be thought of by Persians, and the raiders were thus enabled to march quietly away with their prey. The Salors reckon themselves to consist of 6,000 families; assigning 2,000 to each of the three clans—Kiptchagi, Dazardoo-Khodja, and Karaman-

* "The noblest of the Turcomans."—Vámbéry.—C. M.

Yalavatch—into which they are divided. This figure, however, is undoubtedly exaggerated. They have never recovered from the crushing defeat experienced at Sarakhs during its siege by Abbas Meeza, and the tribe to-day scarcely numbers more than 3,000 families at Merv."

POLITICAL DIVISIONS OF THE TURCOMANS.*

	Tents.	Total.
I. INDEPENDENT :—		
Merv Tekkes - - -	50,000	
Akhal Tekkes - - -	30,000	
Sariks - - - -	13,000	—93,000
II. SUBJECT TO RUSSIA :—		
Yomoods (Djafarbai) - -	8,000	
Yomoods (of Khiva) - -	20,000	
Tchaudors - - - -	12,000	
Goklans (of Khiva) - -	2,000	
Various minor tribes - -	2,000	
Ersaris (subject to Bokhara, and thus indirectly to Russia) - - - -	50,000	—94,000
III. SUBJECT TO PERSIA :—		
Yomoods - - - -	7,000	
Goklans - - - -	4,000	—11,000
IV. SUBJECT TO AFGHANISTAN :—		
Alielis - - - - -	3,000	— 3,000
Tents - -		201,000
Souls - -		1,005,000

* Arranged by the Author.

CHAPTER V.

CAMP LIFE IN THE DESERT.

What the Turcoman tents are like.—Fraser's description of the Turcoman's portable house.—A tent warmer than the best built house.—Winter in the desert.—One advantage of living in a kibitka.—A "wrinkle" for the military authorities in India.—Russian troops housed in tents.—An aoul.—Description of an encampment.—Conolly's account of a Turcoman camp in the desert.—Fraser's picture of a Goklan encampment.—A night-halt among the Goklans.—A camp at dawn.—Break up of the camp.—Turcomans on the march.—Arrival at a halting-place.—Picturesque scenes.—Patriotic spirit of the Turcomans.—"Home, sweet home."

"The Central Asian tent or snail shell of the nomad has left upon my mind a very pleasing impression. Cool in summer, and genially warm in winter, what a blessing is its shelter when the wild hurricane rages in all directions around the almost boundless steppes! A stranger is often fearful lest the dread elements should rend into a thousand pieces so frail an abode, but the Turcoman has no such apprehension; he attaches the cords fast and sleeps sweetly, for the howling of the storm sounds in his ear like the song that lulls the infant in its cradle."—VÁMBÉRY.

CONOLLY found the Turcoman tents "for neatness and comfort to surpass all others. Four pieces of frame-work (made of light sticks loosely pivoted on each other, so that they may be drawn out or

together, at pleasure) are set up in a circle of 12 feet diameter, place being left for the lintels of a wooden door. To the top of this frame are tied the ends of many long pliant sticks, which bend up in the shape of a dome, and are fixed in a circular hoop of wood, which forms the top, and the chimney of the top. Over this skeleton work are laid large cloths of thick black felt: they are raised on forked sticks, tied round the dome, and kept close by a broad band which goes round the centre of the whole. Not a pin or a pole is required for these tents; they are roomy and a defence against all weathers, and one is no more than a load for a camel."

Fraser gives a more elaborate description of them: —"The frame of the portable wooden houses of the Turcomans is curiously constructed of light wood, disposed in laths of about an inch broad, by three-quarters thick, crossing one another diagonally, but at right angles, about a foot asunder, and pinned at each crossing by thongs of raw hide, so as to be moveable; and the whole frame-work may be closed up or opened, in the manner of those toys for children that represent a company of soldiers, and close or expand at will so as to form open or close column. One or more pieces thus constructed being stretched out, surround a circular space of from 15 to 20 feet diameter, and form the skeleton of the walls, which are made firm by bands of hair or woollen ropes hitched round the end of each rod to secure it in its position. From the upper ends of these, rods of a similar kind, bent near the wall-end into somewhat less than a right angle, are so disposed that the longer portions slope to the centre, and being tied

thus with ropes, form the frame-work of a roof; over which is thrown a covering of black *numud*, leaving in the centre a large hole to give vent to the smoke, and light to the dwelling; similar *numuds* are wrapt round the walls, and outside of these, to keep all tight, is bound another frame, formed of split reeds or cane, or of very light and tough wood, tied together with strong twine, the pieces being perpendicular; and this is itself secured by a strong band of woven hair-stuff, which firmly unites the whole. The large round opening at top is covered, as occasion requires, by a piece of *numud*, which is drawn off or on by a strong cord, like a curtain. If the wind be powerful, a stick is placed to leeward, which supports the fabric.

"In most of these houses they do not keep a carpet, or *numud*, constantly spread; but the better classes use a carpet shaped somewhat in the form of a horse-shoe, having the centre cut out for the fire-place, and the ends truncated, that those of inferior condition, or who do not choose to take off their boots, may sit down upon the ground. Upon this carpet they place one or two other *numuds*, as may be required, for guests of distinction. When they have women in the tent, a division of split reeds is made for their convenience, but the richer people have a separate tent for their private apartments. The furniture of these tents consists of little more than the furniture of the camels and horses; *joals*, or bags in which their goods are packed, and which are often made of a very handsome species of worsted velvet carpet, of rich patterns; the swords, guns, spears, bows and arrows, and other implements of the family,

with odds and ends of every description, may be seen hung on the ends of the wooden rods, which form very convenient pins for the purpose. Among the Goklans and Yomoods, all the domestic utensils are made of wood, the *calleeoons*, the trays for presenting food, milk vessels, &c., and in this respect there is a remarkable change from the domestic economy of the higher country, where all these things are formed of clay or metal."

Ferrier says that the Turcomans can make the kibitka warmer than the best built house—a matter of some consequence to them, seeing how severe the winters are in the country they inhabit. Says Vámbéry: "Even the inhabitants of the cities of Central Asia marvel that the nomads can support life in the bleak open country, amid fearful storms and long weeks of snow. Indeed, with a cold of 40 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit, it cannot be very pleasant to live in a tent. Still, even this occasions no inconvenience to the hardy child of nature. Himself wrapt up in a double suit of clothes, he doubles the felt hangings of his tent, which is pitched in a valley or some other sheltered spot. Besides this the number of its inhabitants is increased, and when the *saksaoul* (the root of a tree, hard as stone, and covered with knobs) begins to give out its heat, which lasts for hours, the want of a settled home is quite forgotten. The family circle is drawn closer round the hearth. The daughter of the house must continually hand round the skin of *koomis*. This favourite beverage opens the heart and loosens the tongue. When, furthermore, a *bakshi* (troubadour) is present to enliven the winter evening with his lays,

then even the howling of the tempest without serves as music."

Abbott found the Turcoman tents to be "the most comfortable dwellings in the serene climate of Merv. A house cannot be adapted to the vicissitudes of heat and cold which make the year; whereas, by removing a portion of the felt covering, the tent is open to the air in summer, and, in winter, a fire lighted in the centre makes it the warmest of retreats, all the smoke rising through the skylight in the roof, not to mention the great advantage of being able to migrate, dwelling and all, to a sunny or sheltered spot."

Lieutenant Conolly certainly thinks "that a hint might be taken from the Turcomans in this particular, and that tents something after this fashion might be contrived for military purposes to supersede the tents we use. A large camp could be pitched in a small space, be better defended, and not so easily set on fire; felt will burn to tinder rather than a blaze, and they are in a great degree waterproof. In India especially, where troops frequently arrive at stations at which there are no quarters for them, the tents would be invaluable; soldiers might be out at all seasons under such covering."

The Russians have long recognised the excellence of the kibitka, and have largely employed it in recent campaigns. Lieutenant Stumm, a German officer who accompanied the Russian expedition to Khiva in 1873, highly approved of it for military purposes. He brought one back with him to show the military authorities at Berlin. In 1878 and 1879, the greater part of the troops belonging to the Atrek column were housed under kibitkas, and the

Russian soldiers found the felt coverings of the tents as impervious to the frost as the felt boots which they themselves wear in their own country, and which are warmer even than fur. *Kibitka* is the Russian term for the nomad tent. The Turcomans have two designations: "*karavy* * ('black tent,' that is, the tent which has grown brown or black with age); and *akoy* ('white tent,' that is, one covered in the interior with felt of snowy whiteness)—it is erected for newly-married couples, or for guests to whom they wish to pay particular honour." An encampment of 20 to 50 kibitkas scattered about a district is known as an *aoul*, a term which Abbot expressively translates as a "portable village."

Such, then, are the simple houses of the Turcomans. "The † encampment is generally square, enclosing an open space, or forming a broad street, the houses being ranged on either side, with their doors towards each other, and at these may be always seen the most picturesque groups, occupied with the various domestic duties, or smoking their simple wooden *calleeoons*. The more important encampments are often surrounded by a fence of reeds, which serves to protect the flocks from petty thefts. The Turcomans change their station frequently, as the pasture around them becomes scarce, seldom remaining more than five or six days" (Abbott "three days") "in one place. They encamp in parties of from 30 to 100, or even as far as 200 families." In the plain of Akhal the aouls are large, and that of Geok Tepe contains 5,000 kibitkas. "It ‡ is a wild

* Vámbéry. † Fraser. ‡ Conolly.

scene, a Turcoman camp. All its tenants are astir at daybreak, and the women, after a short busy period, retire to work within their tents. Towards evening the men get together, and sit in circles discoursing. The mistress of a tent is seen seated outside knitting; near her is 'an old negro woman, dry and withered as the deserts of Lybia,' who is churning in a skin hung upon three sticks, or dandling the last-born; and the young fry, dirty and naked, except, perhaps, a small jacket, or skull-cap, fantastically covered with coins, bits of metal, or beads and charms, run about in glee like so many imps, screaming and flinging dust on each other, the great game of these unsophisticated children of nature. As the day declines, the camels are driven in and folded within the camp. Soon after the sun has set, a few watchers are set; here and there, perhaps, in a tent remain for a short time 'the light of the candle and the sound of the millstones,' but soon the whole camp is in still repose."

Fraser describes a Goklan encampment: "Their houses at first sight appeared to be formed of reeds, covered with black carpets, and they were ranged so as to form a street, through which our road led us, so that we had full opportunity to gratify our curiosity; but I should in vain attempt to describe these places or their inhabitants; the perfect novelty of feature and costume, the wild uncouthness of the figures, both male and female, that rushed forth to salute us, mingled with a variety of animals hardly more wild than they; the multitudes of children that ran screaming from every tent, and frolicked naked about, formed a scene that baffles

delineation. A camp of Indians, a horde of gipsies, a group of the wildest north of Scotland or Irish fishing-huts, with their inhabitants, were the recollections rapidly suggested by what we saw. There was something of all of these, and yet none of them can convey any just idea of a Turcoman camp."

Fraser brings home forcibly to us camp-life among the Turcomans, in an account he gives of one of his night-halts at a Goklan aoul:—"Weariness does not always ensure sleep. The excitation experienced the previous day, the novelty of the situation, joined to the howling of the dogs, the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of cattle in the inclosures around, prevented me from sleeping until near daylight. I would fain have quitted the tent to take a quieting stroll in the refreshing breeze without, but I found that egress as well as entrance was entirely prevented (unless at the expense of wakening some one of the inmates of the tent) by the huge and wary dogs that kept watch without; the moment one stirred, they growled a warning note, and any attempt at quitting the tent would have been forcibly resisted by these faithful but savage guards. I found this to be the case even after the night was done, for taking a short turn in the morning, and attempting to cross the boundary ditch of the camp, I was attacked by five or six of these powerful animals, which set open-mouthed upon me; and badly enough I should have fared, had not a very old and wrinkled hag slowly risen from behind a heap of earth, where she had been arranging her few grizzled hairs, and used her influence most powerfully with the assailants, who retreated growling a surly displeasure.

"A strange scene we gazed upon when the early morning induced us to arise and go forth; the camp, a square, in the south face of which our tent formed the centre, surrounded a space of perhaps a hundred and fifty paces long by a hundred wide; and this was filled with horses before their owners' doors, camels standing or kneeling down in circles at their food, with grotesque figures in the Turcoman costume all hurrying to and fro, preparing for a march; women in their picturesque head-dresses sitting at the tent-doors, occupied in their various household duties, arranging their habiliments, or bringing water from the river, and surrounded by groups of almost naked children; sheep and cattle of all sorts pouring out of their inclosures and making the best of the way to the pastures, following or accompanied by shouting herds and barking dogs in abundance. If there was nothing imposing from its brilliancy, the scene still pleased from its animation, and interested by its unwonted peculiarity."

The break up of a Turcoman camp is best described by Conolly:—"The tents had been partly stripped the night before, and with the earliest dawn the whole camp was in motion. The tents were struck and packed on the roaring camels, the women performing nearly all the labour, abusing their beasts and screaming to each other; very old women and young children were stowed away between nummuds and balanced by various articles of domestic furniture; and after half an hour of bustle and noise that no description could give an idea of, we fell in and marched away. There were (old and young)

600 camels to the 45 tents, and 2,000 goats and sheep. We took one line of march, and the sheep were driven ahead by themselves. The women led the camels on foot, and the men on horses patrolled on all sides at a great distance. Nothing could well be conceived more wild and picturesque than this scene; the gipsy-like, elfish-looking creatures called women, stepping resolutely out, leading their strangely laden camels, by the side of which the young ones trotted."

Vámbéry completes the picture in his incomparably vivid manner:—"At last the spot fixed on by the guide is reached. An inhabitant of cities might imagine that now the greatest confusion would arise. But no; everybody has his appointed office, everybody knows what he has to do, everything has its fixed place. While the paterfamilias unsaddles his cooled horse and lets him loose on the pasture, the younger lads collect, with frightful clamour, the sheep and the camels, which are only too disposed to wander. They must stay to be milked. Meanwhile, the tent has to be taken down from the camels' backs. The old matron seizes the latticed framework and fixes it in its place, spitting wildly right and left as she does so. Another makes fast the bent rods which form the vaulting of the roof. A third sets on top of all a sort of round cover or lid, which serves the double purpose of chimney and window. While they are covering the woodwork with curtains of felt, the children inside have already hung up the provision sacks, and placed the enormous tripod on the crackling fire. This is all done in a few moments. Magical is the erection, and as

magical is the disappearance of the nomads' habitation. Still, however, the noise of the sheep and the camels, of screaming women and children, resounds about the tent. They form, indeed, a strange chorus in the midst of the noonday silence of the desert. Milking-time—the daily harvest of these pastoral tribes—is, however, the busiest time in the 24 hours. Especial trouble is given by the greedy children, whose swollen bellies are the result and evidence of an unlimited appetite for milk. The poor women have much to suffer from the vicious or impatient disposition of the beasts; but, although the men are standing by, the smallest help is rigorously refused, as it would be held the greatest disgrace for a man to take part in work appointed to women."

The refined Arthur Conolly found a great charm in this mode of life, and could well "understand the dislike that a Turcoman has to living in a city. It has been thought that inhabitants of mountainous countries have the strongest feelings of love for their homes, because they retain the most vivid recollections of the bold scenery that they were born in; but the Swiss or Highlanders scarcely sigh more for their mountains than do the Arabs and Turcomans for the desert: home is home all the world over."

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT THEY EAT AND HOW THEY TREAT STRANGERS.

The hospitality of the Turcomans.—Conolly's opinion of hospitality in general and of Turcoman hospitality in particular.—The Arab's mode of asking a victim to strip.—A meal in a Goklan's tent.—A dinner in a chief's abode on the banks of the Goorgan.—Major Abbott's dinner with the High Priest of Merv.—Burnes' opinion of Turcoman cookery.—Boiling a sheep entire.—Lamb grilled on ramrods.—A fact for *savants*.—A Turcoman breakfast.—Fraser's breakfast in a Goklan tent.—Vámbéry's receipt for making *pilaf*.—How the Turcomans bake their bread.—The only drink of the nomads.—Carnivorous propensities disappearing.—The melons of Merv.—The Turcoman pipe.—The Turcoman's mode of playing chess.—Turcoman music.—Burnes' account of nomad songs.—Fraser's prosy and Vámbéry's picturesque description of the troubadours.—Translation of a Turcoman war song.

"A drop of water to the man thirsty in the wilderness washes away a hundred years' sins."—TURCOMAN PROVERB.

"The Turcomans* pique themselves upon hospitality: in some places its duties are willingly and liberally, as well as honestly discharged; but among

* Fraser.

the tribes whose morals have been vitiated by habits of plunder it is seldom safe to trust to the strongest professions. When any stranger (who is not an acknowledged enemy) enters a camp, he is saluted at the first tent he approaches by its inhabitants, who run out, seize his reins, and insist on his alighting and becoming their guest; even should the tent contain but a single woman, she will give the 'Salaam Aleikoom,' and insist on doing the honours; if he refuse, or attempt to excuse himself, and go to another tent, it is taken as a serious affront, and abuse, if not worse, is the consequence. 'What!' will the offended party exclaim, 'does he suppose that I had not bread and food enough to offer him, that he thus quits my house for another's? or was not the shelter of my house as sufficient for his head as that of such a one?' Wherever he goes he is saluted with the words of peace; the *calleeoon* is presented, and sour curds, butter-milk, bread and cheese, the usual fare, is set before him. There is then no fear of open aggression, either on the part of the host, or any of the camp; nor will they, in general, even steal anything from him; and he may depend on being furnished with a guide to the extent of their range of country, if not to the next stage."

Conolly expresses it as his opinion that, "as far as giving to eat and to drink, the Turcomans are hospitable; but the very man who gives you bread in his tent will not scuple to fall upon you when you are beyond its precincts. The same hospitality of wandering tribes has been so lauded by poets and others, that it has become a fashion to talk as if the virtue existed only among demi-savages, and the man

who exercises it shall be excused though he be a thief and a cut-throat. Your person is sacred and your life is to be dearer to him than his own while you are under the shadow of his tent;—but you cannot remain there for ever. Perhaps at the very moment you are eating his salt, your host is thinking how at a future occasion he may best transfer part of your wealth to himself; and when you do meet him on his plain, the odds are very much against you.

"We are taken with the poetically expressive idiom of the Arab, who, as a hint to a stranger to surrender his property, says, 'Cousin, undress thyself; thy aunt is without a garment';—but we think it expedient to hang a man who translates and applies the saying in our own country. The fact is, that, in our love for the romantic, we judge these wild people nearly by the same standard with which they measure themselves. The virtues and vices of all nomad people are much the same; they entertain exaggerated notions of hospitality and bravery, but they are generally greedy, mean and thievish; and, though they may keep good faith with their own race, they will find means to evade the spirit of a pledge given to a stranger, if it be much to their interest to do so. The hospitality appears greater than that of settled people, because when travelling they rely upon each other for food and shelter; but they must of necessity do so. Perhaps in earlier times the feeling was exercised more as a virtue, but now there is to the full as much pride as generosity in it, for you will anger a man to the extent of making him your enemy if you pass his tent, though he may not have wherewithal to feed you; and, even allowing that

a generous feeling prompts his courtesy, it is not so strong a one but that avarice will get the better of it if you have that which tempts him."

Fraser describes the fare in the hospitable tent of a Goklan Turcoman:—"The Goklan's meal was coarse and simple enough. The cloth spread before us was of coarse woollen, which bore the marks of having seen mighty service. Among the wandering tribes of Persia it is considered unlucky to wash the cloth that is spread before them (like a table-cloth), and as many fragments of every meal are wrapped up in it when the dishes are removed, not to speak of the stains occasioned by accidents, some idea may be formed of the greasy, filthy condition to which such a cloth attains. On this a cake of coarse bread, an inch and a half thick, was placed before each person, and a mess of boiled rice, with a small quantity of meat in the fashion of a *pilaf*, but far from approaching that respectable dish, either in quality or flavour, was set in the middle. We all fell upon this most greedily; we, ravenous from long fasting, and little caring with what our cravings might be satisfied, the others, little accustomed to better fare, esteeming it a sort of feast. Our drink was butter-milk and water, seasoned with a little salt."

Fraser, however, fared better in another Goklan's tent, in a richer district, nearer the Caspian. "There were at least 20 persons present at dinner, which was a comfortable meal. A copper tray containing a dish of *pilaf*, a stew of meat, a small saucer of vegetables and truffles stewed in milk, with a bowl of sherbet, was placed before me; another of the same, but of larger dimensions, was allotted to the khan and the

meerza, and to each pair of the other guests a dish of rice, some meat or stew, with a bowl of buttermilk and water for sherbet. Everyone seemed inclined to do honour to the khan's hospitality, and upon the pronunciation of the usual 'Bismillah,' all fell to voraciously. The room was spacious, and open all round except at the upper end; the floor of clay raised, in the upper end of which a fireplace had been constructed and kept constantly filled with blazing logs, which served for light as well as heat. The latter was not much required, indeed, and the former object was aided by a large lamp or vase full of grease, in which a large wick was burning, which was guarded from the full action of the wind by a circular shade of thin muslin."

Major Abbott dined with the Khalifa, or High Priest, at Merv. "After some discourse, water and a basin were brought round, and we washed our hands, drying them, as usual, on our handkerchiefs. Then a filthy cloth of chintz, greased to the consistency of leather, was spread on the ground before us. It is considered thankless to wash from a table-cloth the stains of former banquets, or to suffer a crumb to be lost. Upon the table-cloth metallic trays were set, containing *pilaf*, hot and very greasy. Tucking up my right sleeve, I set to work, spilling half the rice into my lap, and making little way against the practised fists and elbows of the priests. As for the Khalifa, he showed himself a man of might in the mysteries of the table, tearing large handfuls of mutton from the bone, as a bear might claw the scalp from a human victim, and plunging elbow-deep into the hot and greasy rice. Seeing how little

progress I made, he said, laughing, 'We have a proverb, that "you should never spare the cates of the Dervish. They come from heaven, you know, and cost nothing."'

"The two sons of the Khalifa were the only attendants. This, I find, was ordered as a compliment. It recalled sundry remembrances of the patriarchal histories. At length even the Khalifa's arm waxed faint, and his jaw wagged more slowly, and then with fists greased above the wrists, we sat waiting for the water which was to laugh at the slush upon our fingers, and eventually be absorbed, with a large mass of highly-scented mutton fat and gravy, by our handkerchiefs, haunting us the rest of the day with the stale smell of *pilaf*. And then we all joined in the *fatih*, or grace, and swept the descending benediction off our beards."

After reading this, one will be prepared to agree with Burnes that "the Turcomans are not very choice in their cookery. Their cakes are baked about two feet in diameter, and an inch thick, of the coarsest flour, and generally mixed up with slices of pumpkin. They are always eaten fresh. When the party assembles, the cloth is spread, and each person crumbles down the piece of cake which is laid before him. The meat is then brought, which consists of one entire sheep, boiled in a huge Russian pot. They separate the flesh from the bones, and tear it into as small pieces as the bread, with which it is mixed. They shred about a dozen of onions, and throw the whole mess into the pot where the meat has been boiled, and mix it up with the soup. It is then served out in wooden bowls, one of which is

placed before every two persons. Their mode of eating is as singular as that of preparation; they fill their open hand, and, commencing from the wrist, lick it up like dogs, holding the head over the bowl, which catches all that falls. Each of the two in his turn fills his hand, and holds his head over the bowl. Melons follow, and the repast concludes with a pipe of tobacco. The women never eat with the men."

Conolly ate, "with some Turcomans, lamb grilled on ramrods over the embers of the stump of a tree. The Turcomans had much the advantage of us, for they tore the hot flesh in pieces with their horny fingers, and had nearly made an end of the meat before we could venture upon it. I learned from this a fact, which is perhaps not generally understood by civilised people —that the mouth can bear a much greater heat than the fingers. The Turcomans burn sticks or weeds to ashes, and cover up a cake of unleavened dough in them, turning it every now and then to prevent its burning: bread thus prepared is excellent."

At one tent Conolly dined at, "there was little ceremony about the meal; *pilaf* was brought in large wooden bowls, into which hands were thrust as soon as the Cazee had said Bismillah! and there was nothing left in them to show that the food was not approved of. A large bicker of *chaal* (camel's milk) went round, from which all drank, and then the Cazee said an Arabic grace, all raising their palms the while, and stroking down their beards at the conclusion of it."

Abbott enjoyed the Turcoman breakfast of home-made macaroni, rolled in broad thin cakes cut into

strips by a sword, and stewed with *kooroot* (dried curds), milk, and syrup of grape-juice, followed by a mutton and bread stew. Fraser "breakfasted lightly enough in a Goklan chief's tent upon a little bread and *mass* (sour curd), to which, at my request, was added a little fresh butter and sweet milk. It is strange, that although milk and all the produce of a dairy abounds in the camps of these people, they seldom use any of it as food, except butter-milk mixed with water; *mass*, or sour curd, which they also press and dry to mix with water, when the fresh is scarce, and cheese which is extremely poor and bad; of the quantity of rich butter which is made, they seldom use any, except occasionally in a *pilaf*, but keep the whole for sale in the villages around."

Vámbéry gives the receipt for making "*pilaf* or *palau*, also called *ash*, which, though related to the *pilau* of the Persians and the *pilaf* of the Turks, by far surpasses both these in savour. I have lived on it for a long time, and willingly impart to Europeans my knowledge of how it is prepared. A few spoonfuls of fat are melted (in Central Asia the fat of the tail is usually taken) in a vessel, and as soon as it is quite hot, the meat, cut up into small pieces, is thrown in. When these are in part fried, water is poured upon it to the depth of about three fingers, and it is left slowly boiling until the meat is soft; pepper and thinly sliced carrots are then added, and on the top of these ingredients is put a layer of rice. After it has been freed from its mucilaginous parts, some more water is added, and as soon as it has been absorbed by the rice the fire is lessened, and the pot, well closed, is left over the red-hot coals, until

the rice, meat, and carrots are thoroughly cooked in the steam.

"After half an hour the lid is opened, and the food served in such a way that the different layers lie separately in the dish, first the rice, floating in fat, then the carrots, and the meat at the top, with which the meal is begun. This dish is excellent, and indispensable alike on the royal table and in the hut of the poorest. From here it was introduced among the Afghans; by them to the Persians, who call it kabuli (kabul). The *pilau*, if I am not mistaken, has its origin in Central Asia, and spread from thence far and wide over Western Asia."

"When the Turcomans make their bread," says Conolly, "they knead the dough in a wooden trough, or on a dried skin, and bake it on the hearth by covering it up in wood embers. They also prepare bread with oil or clarified butter—the cake that the widow of Zarephtha was picking up sticks to dress, that she might eat with her son and then die: a handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruise. The bread, being laid on a cloth, is broken into four pieces; the master says Bismillah as a signal to commence the meal, and a stranger who happened to be present, but not inclined to eat, would break off a morsel and put it in his bosom, not to slight the invitation. As a better food, they eat rice or *yarma* (bruised wheat) and sour milk; and on great occasions a sheep is killed, and a soup or pilau made. Camels are too valuable to be killed for food, but when an animal breaks his leg incurably, or appears likely to die, they cut its throat, with the usual ceremonies, and eat it. Their drink is butter-milk, *cooppook*, and, in season

the wealthiest are said to get tipsy on *koomis*, or fermented mare's milk, but we did not taste any."

Burnes remarks that "camel's milk is the only drink of the Turcomans. It is mixed with water, and the cream is then drawn off. The Turcomans call it *chaal*, and it has an acid but not unpleasant taste. The thinner part of the milk is considered a grateful draught by the people, but to me it tasted sour and acrid."

Conolly continues: "To judge from the accounts of former writers, the Turcomans are less carnivorous than they were. Mr. Anthony Jenkinson, who travelled across the Caspian desert to Khiva in the year 1568, makes no mention of bread, but says that he was 'very gently entertained with mare's milk and the flesh of a wild horse'; and Abulghazi Khan relates that Kian Khan, son of Oguz Khan, the great Tartar, gave a feast which lasted ten days and nights, in which time were consumed 900 horses, 9,000 sheep, and 90 skinfuls of *koomis*. In every tent we observed one or two cast-iron pots, which were brought from Russia; these were placed over the fire on tripods, and everything was cooked in them."

Merv and Akhal are famous for their sweet melons and water-melons, both of which grow to an enormous size on the stable heaps of the Tekkes, and possess a delicious flavour. Burnes, who praises the melons as loudly as the Russians, observes that the "Turcomans cut them up with great dexterity and neatness, separate the pulp from the skin, which is not thicker than that of an orange, by a single sweep of the knife, then dividing it into a dozen pieces." In Akhal mulberries abound.

The Turcomans are very fond of smoking. "Their 'calleeoon,' or pipe, is a very simple machine, being only a hollow reed, which they use for inhaling the smoke, often without passing it through water at all." * "If they have not a pipe with them, they wet the ground to the consistency of clay, and cut a small trench, in which they lay a string; then beating down earth upon this, they draw it gently out, and a channel is left, on one end of which they put a pinch of tobacco, and to the other their mouths, and inhale what my friends described as 'a draught cool as the breath of Paradise.'" †

Mr. O'Donovan, who passed the dreary winter of 1879-80 in their company, tells us that "they spend much of their time drinking scalding hot water faintly flavoured with tea; but when they cannot possibly swallow any more, and have sent the water-pipe round sufficiently often, they indulge in a kind of game of odd-and-even, played with the knuckle-bones of a sheep's foot, some of the pieces stained red. Some of the elders play chess, usually on a cotton handkerchief divided into squares by lines of black stitching. The squares are all of the same colour. The chessmen are of the most primitive pattern. The top of a cow's horn does duty as king; a similar smaller one, as vizir or queen. The knights are represented by an upright piece of bone with a couple of notches. The bishop, or, as the piece is termed here, *fil* or elephant, is a piece of something in any shape; and the castles, styled *kokhs*, have the form of mushrooms. The game is precisely the same

* Ferrier. † Conolly.

as in Europe, with some difference as to the method of castling; and dividing the first two-square moves of each pawn into two, moving two forward simultaneously one square each. They play very fairly, and even in the midst of the game make the moves with the most amazing rapidity. The spectators enter into the spirit of the game with the greatest enthusiasm, chattering and squabbling over the relative merits of the different moves."

Conolly did not think much of Turcoman music. "It is said that on the occasion of an ambassador arriving at St. Petersburg from Khiva, in 1714, to treat of an alliance with Peter the Great, the Tsar expressed a liking for the music of the Turcomans. What we heard inclined me not to think much of it." Elsewhere he writes:—"I once heard a young man sing through his nose for half an hour, occasionally striking the two wire strings of his guitar. I could not make out any tune, but was told that he was rather an artiste, and that he had been extemporising the history of a famed horse."

Burnes says:—"In the evening the people assembled to hear a guitar and some Toorkee songs. The style of performance differed from what I have seen in any country; the singer places himself close in front of the musician, so that their knees touch, and the sound is, as it were, conveyed to him by a living conductor when he sends forth his notes. The Torkee is a warlike language, and harmoniously sonorous. The bard, I was told, was singing of love, the theme of every clime."

Fraser heard some Turcoman music in the tent of a Goklan khan. "Two men were introduced, each

carrying a musical instrument. One of them resembled what I have seen in India called a *Bean*, and consisted of two hemispheres of gourds or hollow wood covered with skin, and united by a bar of wood, along which a string passed from one to another, the gourds acting as sounding-boards; the performer upon this, who also sung, used it like a tambourine to beat time. The other was a straight instrument of the kind called *tarr*, upon which the performer thrummed not disagreeably.

"They sung several airs, which consisted of but a few words set to simple notes, and the measure always closed by a single line or chorus that died away in a very sweet and singular cadence, infinitely more agreeable than any music I ever heard in Persia, for the singer did not strain his voice in the way usual in that country, but taught it most curiously to follow the inflections of the tarr, imitating the sound and undulations of the wire, in a manner resembling the low warblings of an Eolian harp; and he continued this for an almost incredible time without drawing breath. If, however, he did not roar like the Persians, he compensated for it in some sort by making the most violent contortions of body, throwing himself into attitudes the most extravagant, shaking his head most violently, and rolling about upon his seat until his sides nearly touched the ground. The movements appeared to proceed from a degree of ecstasy inspired by the music, and which affected everyone in the assembly more or less, for at every close some or other of them expressed their delight in a very audible and even boisterous manner; but I could obtain no satis-

factory explanation of the songs which excited this emotion."

More animating and picturesque is Vámbéry's description:—"How charming to me those scenes, which can never pass from my memory, when on festal occasions, or during the evening entertainments, some Bakhshi (troubadour) used to recite the verses of Makhdumkuli. When I was in Atrek, one of these troubadours had his tent close to our own; and as he paid us a visit of an evening, bringing his instrument with him, there flocked round him the young men of the vicinity, whom he was constrained to treat with some of his heroic lays. His singing consisted of certain forced guttural sounds, which we might rather take for a rattle than a song, and which he accompanied at first with gentle touches of the strings, but afterwards, as he became more excited, with wilder strokes upon the instrument. The hotter the battle, the fiercer grew the ardour of the singer and the enthusiasm of his youthful listeners; and really, they assumed the appearance of a romance, when the young nomads, uttering deep groans, hurled their caps to the ground, and dashed their hands in a passion through the curls of their hair, just as if they were furious to combat with themselves."

Alexander Burnes gives a translation of a Turcoman war-song:—

"The Tekke Turcomans to the Kurds."

"Lootf Ali Khan! It is time to lead you away captive, Begler!* It is time to marshal our forces at night, and prepare for a 'tchapao'† in the morning.

* Begler—lord or chief. † Foray.

The dust of your fields shall blow away under the hoofs of the Turcomans.
The Tekkes will bear off your daughter arrayed in velvet.
Thanks be to God, my name shall rebound unto the skies.
If you know the year of the goat,* know that I shall then plunder Meshed.
All your hopes in Khorassan shall be broken. You will now be obliged to flee to Teheran, Begler!
I have a hundred noble youths who watch you.
Nor do they lack attention; they will drag you to my presence, Begler!
Oh, Begler! I'll bear off your guns to Khiva; your power is gone.
I'll assemble my warriors on the plain.
If you have sense, remember my advice.
Send me a youth, and a beautiful girl as a tribute.
Oh, Bhaee Mahommed!† this is the time of my happiness."

* This is the manner of reckoning their years.
† The name of the poet.

CHAPTER VII.

LIFE AND MANNERS AMONG THE TURCOMANS.

Personal appearance of the Turcomans.—Various opinions of their aspect.—Their love of politics.—Their dialect.—Their religion.—Fraser's opinion of their character.—Wealth of the Goorgan Yomoods and Merv Tekkes.—Baron Bode on their alleged bravery.—"The *beau ideal* of light dragoons."—Colonel Valentine Baker's opinion of their military qualities.—Afghanistan at Russia's mercy.—General Markozoff on the fighting powers of the Tekkes.—Their mode of attack.—A Turcoman proverb bettered.—Captain Napier's belief in the improvement of the Tekkes.—Captain Bikoff's visit to the Ersaris.—Napier refuted by Grodekoff and McGregor.—England must not be misled by false mediums.—The truth about the Tekkes.—Turcoman dress.—The social fabric and administration among the Turcomans.—A nation without a head.—Government by custom.—The rule of "Deb."—General Petroosevitch's views of Tekke society.—Criticism on it.

"The Turcoman is wont to say, Biz bibash khalk bolamiz (We are a people without a head), and we will not have one. We are all equal, with us everyone is king."—VÁMBÉRY.

"The Turcomans are almost in a state of nature. They have neither science nor literature; they are even without mosques, though not without religion; they are ignorant of the art of extracting or distilling spirits; their food is simple, and their domestic habits fit them for the hour of battle."—BURNES.

Burnes describes the Turcoman as "having a skull like a Chinese, with a flat face, projecting cheek-bones, and a countenance tapering to the chin, which has a most scanty crop of hair. He is by no means ugly, and his body and features are alike manly." According to Fraser, "many of the men are tall, stout, and well made, with small eyes drawn up at the corners" (reminding Burnes of being "swollen"), "and small flat noses. Some differ from this and have handsome features, more resembling those of Europeans than Asiatics. The Yomoods have less of the Tartar cast of countenance than the Goklans and Tekkes. In most of them there is a peculiarity of manner which distinguishes them from the Persians, though it is not easy to decide whether it consists in feature or manner—probably in both. Their complexion is in general lighter and more sallow than that of the Persians, and many of them have eyes and hair so fair, that I took them for Russians, whom they also resembled in a certain harsh irregularity of feature." "Their height," says Abbott, "averages about five feet seven inches, but they are less heavily framed than the Uzbek, and with a countenance sometimes dark and sometimes florid, irregular features, and small, round, lively eyes."

Colonel Baker found in their eyes "generally a merry, cunning twinkle, which does not give the idea of a hard, cold-blooded race. In person they are muscular, heavy-limbed men, with large hands. Their manners are coarse and rough, presenting a great contrast to the polish of the Persians; but, on the other hand, they are manly, brave and enduring."

"The Turcoman," observes Vámbéry, "is always

remarkable for his bold, penetrating glance, which distinguishes him from all the nomads and inhabitants of towns in Central Asia, and for his proud military bearing; for although I have seen many young men of martial demeanour amongst the Kirghiz, Karakalpak, and Uzbeks, it was only in the Turcoman that I found an absolute independence, an absence of all restraint. The pure Turcoman type, which is to be found among the Tekke and Tchaudor, living in the heart of the desert, is denoted by a middling stature, proportionately small head, oblong skull (which is ascribed to the circumstance that they are not placed at an early period in a cradle, but in a swing made of a linen cloth), cheek-bones not high, snub nose, longish chin, feet bent inwardly—probably the consequence of their continual riding on horseback—and particularly by the bright, sparkling, fiery eyes, which are remarkable in all sons of the desert, but especially in the Turcomans.

"In his domestic circle the Turcoman presents us a picture of the most absolute indolence. In his eyes it is the greatest shame for a man to apply his hand to any domestic occupation. He has nothing to do but to tend his horse; that duty once over, he hurries to his neighbour, or joins one of the group that squat on the ground before the tents, discussing topics connected with politics, recent raids, or horseflesh. He is prone to indulge for hours in conversation on political matters." Ferrier considers him "coarse, his manners rude as the country in which he lives, and he is insensible to pain and sorrow for himself as well as for others. The cold and insensible temperament of this people is in singular contrast to the

amorous nations that surround them. As regards occupation, they are perfectly ignorant of the meaning of the word, unless it is in some measure connected with their expeditions, and they pass the greatest portion of their time in unmitigated idleness." Conolly gives them the character of being a "very dirty people. Water is but sparingly used by them, and they wear the same clothes for a shockingly long time. To this cause much of the disease which prevails among them may be attributed. They are subject to a dryness of the skin, and often lose both eyelashes and eyebrows, vegetables being unknown to them. They suffer also from ophthalmia and rheumatism, the former being almost universal among them." They speak the Toorkee dialect. "It is possible," observes Burnes, "to go anywhere in Central Asia with this language." Conolly says: "I was particularly struck with the softness of the Toorkee language as spoken by the Turcomans; so much so, that the first persons whom I heard speak it appeared to me to lisp."

In religion they are Sunni Mussulmans, whereas the Persians are of the sect of the Sheeahs. "This, in their opinion," states Ferrier, corroborating Conolly and Fraser, "justifies the right they have arrogated to themselves of seizing the latter and selling them into slavery; indeed, they consider this a very meritorious act, and agreeable to God, for directly they have them in their possession they make orthodox Mussulmans of them. I think it is not impossible that the Turcomans hold this language, feeling that they cannot offer any other excuse for carrying on the infamous traffic of man-

stealing. They are Mahomedans in name only, and are certainly quite as much sinners in the fact as in the form. The majority amongst them do not know a prayer, and never say one; fasting, ablutions, and purifications, and meats forbidden by the Koran, with the other precepts of that holy book, are matters to which they pay not the slightest attention. Their Moollahs are few in number, and as ignorant as themselves."

Being encouraged to wage a religious war against the Persians, Fraser considers it to be "not surprising that the tribes in question should have become cruel, blood-thirsty, and rapacious; these dispositions pervade even their private lives and domestic relations; the life of man has but little value in their eyes, and a word, a look, or a trivial mistake, is constantly apt to occasion bloodshed. The merest trifle will induce a Turcoman to put his wife, his child, or his servant to death; and the more frequent occurrence of such incidents is prevented rather by considerations of interest than by any restraint of moral feeling, or the ties of blood and affection." Burnes mentions that they "have no mosques; they say their prayers in the tent or in the desert, without ablution and without a carpet. They have few *moollahs*, or priests, for the church has little honour among them, and they are but poor followers of the Prophet. They have no education to assuage the fiercer passions, and this renders the men unsusceptible of pity, and the women indifferent to chastity."

Conolly considered it "a matter for wonder that men with such few apparent wants as the Turco-

mans should be so avaricious, for they both feed and clothe themselves indifferently; but the inhabitants of deserts seem to have no less desire than more civilised people to possess greater wealth than they have occasion for, and the burden of their prayer is, More mares and more camels." The wealthiest man among the Goorgan Yomoods, in Conolly's time, possessed 700 camels, 5,000 sheep and goats, and 200 mares. "The Turcomans keep their money and little valuable etceteras in large purses made of the skins of camels' necks: hence the Turcoman expression, 'a neckful of money.'" Grodekoff was told in 1878 that there were men among the Tekkes, "whose hoards of gold and silver loot could not be carried by half a dozen camels. Let them, however, become ever so wealthy, they continue to live on their simple natural fare of unleavened cakes of wheaten meal and camels' milk."

Conolly opines it to be "chiefly to the cowardice of the Persians that the Turcomans owe their reputation for bravery; for, when they exchange blows with the border Kurds, who are good soldiers, they are generally worsted; but they are unceasing in their harassing skirmishes, and, considering the immense fatigue that both they and their horses can undergo upon the scantiest fare, it must be admitted that few irregular troops are equal to them." Baron Bode also expresses this opinion in other words: "It is said that the Turcomans are brave, but I am convinced that this is entirely because their foes are cowards. Like savage animals they take their prey by surprise; they never, if they can help it, fight in the open like men." To

Burnes they appeared "the *beau ideal* of light dragoons."

Perhaps there could be no better judge on this point than Colonel Baker, who says: "Brave to a degree, usually armed with a lance, a sabre, and a double-barrelled gun, often of Birmingham manufacture, and mounted on that splendid and enduring race of Arabs, which, from the peculiarities of soil, now equal English thoroughbreds in size and resemble them in appearance, the Turcoman is the *beau ideal* of a wild irregular horseman. They have many fine and noble qualities, but from generation to generation they have found themselves preyed upon by their more numerous neighbours, and have only preserved their traditions of independence by their hardihood and courage. When settled on the Persian frontier, under the Kurdish governors, they are soon found very tractable, and loyally resist the inroads of their compatriots. At present, from want of organisation, they would fall an easy prey to any European army; but should they ever come under European officers (a result which might easily be brought about) these 120,000 magnificent horsemen, guarding as they do that great sea of desert which, extending from the Caspian to Balkh, now isolates Russia from Herat and India, would form a splendid frontier force. If they be conquered, however, and brought under Russian rule and leading, Afghanistan will ever lie at their mercy."

General Markozoff, who has had many a brush with the Turcomans, expresses the view that, "however brave the Tekkes may be, they are nothing more than a horde; having no cannon, and fearing them;

fighting with arquebuses, and behaving, except when they have their wives and children at their backs, like timid creatures." Grodekoff is still more uncomplimentary: "Like jackals, they are frightened of daylight, and only fall upon their prey before dawn, or just after sunset. In the day-time they scarcely ever attack. They make it a rule never to engage in hostilities unless there is a good chance of success. They do not like to come to hard blows with their enemies, and if they meet with any resistance, no matter how slight, they relinquish their prey, and take to flight. On this account they are always fastidious of attacking people possessing arms." "They make," says Vámbéry, "two, hardly ever three assaults upon their unsuspecting prey; for according to a Turcoman proverb—*Ike deng utshde dong*: Try twice, turn back the third time."*

Captain Napier reported in 1876 that "the Turcoman nomad is not by any means the mere plundering savage that his Persian neighbour paints him. From what I have seen and heard, I would describe the average Turcoman as exceedingly intelligent, *shrewd, and alive to his own interests.* Accustomed from childhood to a free, roving life, anything like restraint would be at first irksome to him, but he does not appear to be incapable of any discipline. The Turcoman of Merv is also now fully alive to the advantages he enjoys in the possession of one of the most fertile tracts in the world, and a guarantee of its undisturbed possession would be one of the strongest

* A Russian, on the contrary, would be impelled to try a third time, influenced by his national proverb, *Bokh loobeet troitsa*—"God loves a trinity."—C. M.

inducements that could be held out to him. He is already in some degree changing his habits, and there is every indication of the possibility of his settling down in course of time, of his own impulse, to peaceful occupations. Two large sections of the race, the Ersari and the Goklan, have already done so, and the character of the Tekke cannot be radically different."

Captain Bikoff, of the Aral Fleet, explored the Oxus in 1878. Of the Turcomans living near Kelif Ferry he reports:—"The behaviour of these semi-barbarous people towards myself was very good. They were very hospitable and cordial, repeatedly inviting me to enter their huts to rest; they spoke readily of their mode of life, showed me the tombs of their saints, their gardens, fields, orchards, &c. Their children ran after my boat along the shore, asking me to land and partake of their melons and water-melons. The good nature exhibited by these simple people was apparently quite genuine."

This confirms Napier's statement about the Ersari Turcomans; but while admitting that the Tekkes are slowly settling down to peaceful pursuits also, candour compels an English writer to point out that the gallant officer takes too sanguine a view of the nomads' present and future behaviour. Two years after Napier sent in his report Grodekoff passed through the devastated region between Herat and Meshed, and found very few evidences indeed of a cessation of Tekke forays. His statements have the drawback of being those of a Russian, but the Blue Book on Central Asian Affairs, for 1880, more than bears out what he writes about the continued rest-

lessness and predatory pursuits of the nomads. Possibly, in the course of another generation, we might have more satisfactory evidences of the settling down of the Tekkes, but Europe cannot wait 30 years for Turcoman turbulence to subside, and Russia will not wait even a demi-decade.

The greatest difficulty the Foreign and India Offices have to contend with in sending agents abroad to obtain reliable information of distant affairs, is to get from them impartial reports. It is so natural for Englishmen, owing to their political training, to take sides, that the moment they step on a foreign shore they proceed to write up or write down the people. The evil is further intensified by the proneness of the public to look upon official reports as being as accurate and as impartial as the Gospel. The result is that the country is constantly being misled by the very men selected to prevent it going astray.

But it does not do to trifle with politics, above all with the politics of an Empire. If the Turcomans are deserving of our sympathy, by all means let them have it. But it will not do to let them have it on false grounds. We shall see directly that the Turcoman, Captain Napier notwithstanding, is still to a great degree "the plundering savage he is painted by the Persians," even if we have not already derived that impression from the writings of more experienced travellers. I write strongly on this point, because Napier's rose-coloured statements have been made use of by partial writers to prove that the Turcomans are the wretched victims of Russian encroachment, ruthlessly disturbed in their hearty desires to settle

down to corn-growing and cattle-breeding, and plague the Persians no more. There is no need to confront Captain Napier's partial opinions with the stern realities described by Colonel Grodekoff and General Petroosevitch. The most damning refutation of his views comes from Colonel McGregor, a fellow-traveller in Khorassan in 1876, and as hearty a Russophobe as Sir Henry Rawlinson could desire.

Respecting the dress of the Turcomans, Fraser says that "that of the men varies according to their rank; many of the poorer sort wear nothing but a short woollen *jubba*, or shirt, and a pair of woollen drawers; others a long brown woollen wrapper; some wear the national Turcoman or Uzbek dress, which consists of several robes or jubbas, descending to a little below the knee, bound round the waist by a sash, a shirt and drawers of cotton or silk. The stuff of which these jubbas are made is a mixture of silk and cotton, striped blue, purple, red, and green. The better classes, however, particularly of the Goklans and Yomoods, have for the most part adopted the common Persian dress; but the Tekkes keep more to their costume, often wearing jubbas woven of camels' hair above the lower garments. The head-dress of the men is various; bonnets of red, black, or grey sheepskin, round and close, or with broad tops; the common Persian cap, or that of quilted cotton worn by the Kurds. On their feet they wear the usual Persian slippers, the Kurdish leather sock, with rolls of cloth round the legs for hose, or boots. The tribe of Tekke in particular wear boots of the Uzbek fashion." Conolly adds that "when at home they go bare-footed or wear a sandal, which is

fastèned on by a string round the big toe. On horseback they generally wear Hessian boots with pointed iron-tipped heels, but sometimes they roll folds of cloth round their legs instead. Abbott speaks of the Turcoman caps being "of black lambskin, slightly conical, but not so graceful as the Persian cap," while Burnes holds it to be "far more becoming than the turban, and gives a party of Turcomans the appearance of a soldier-like and disciplined body." "It sits," writes Abbott, "close to the head, and ends above, not like the Persian cap, in a point, but slightly rounded. The priests at Merv wear turbans. These are small and ungraceful, being a tight thong of muslin wound upon a cap fringed with black lambskin, which gives it a singular appearance. Sometimes the Turcomans wear close skull-caps of black lambskin." "They," adds Burnes, "are very fond of bright-coloured clothes, and choose the lightest shades of red, yellow, and green, as patterns of their flowing *chupkuns* or pelisses."

In regard to their mode of tribal government, Conolly observes that "among themselves the Turcomans possess the French revolutionary motto, 'Liberté, Egalité.' Some respect is paid to old age, and a man of marked courage or military skill exercises an acknowledged influence over his associates; but, as our rascally guide poetically expressed himself, 'Each Turcoman is lord of his own tent, and a slave to the beck of no man.'" According to Wolff: "The Turcomans do not strictly acknowledge any magistrate whatever over them, and all an Aksakal, or grey beard, can do, whenever they assemble together, is, not to give a *hookhum*, *i.e.*

an order, but only an *iltimaas*, *i.e.* an advice, or entreaty."

Each camping party, Fraser tells us, has "its Reish Suffeed, or elder, to whom considerable respect is paid, whose advice is taken on all matters affecting the interests of the community, and who adjusts petty disputes. But they have no governors, chiefs, or nobles among them, and if any one should attempt to arrogate superior consideration to himself, or openly aim at power or authority, it would be a signal for his destruction. Thus, although a sense of interest induces them to unite for the sake of plunder, the very construction of their society precludes the possibility of their ever combining into any very formidable shape. Such an event can only occur when some individual super-eminently endowed with talents and courage, like a Tchengiz, or a Timour, arises, to force into union substances naturally repellent; and it is to this disunion that Persia owes the comparative security she enjoys at present in this quarter. The nature of their government, if such a term can properly be applied to so unorganised a condition of society, approaches to the patriarchal; although the *tires* or sub-divisions into separate families be very numerous and small; and do not, I believe, in the least admit of any foreign interference, or claim to superiority of one over the other.

"Even in the minor occurrences of life, this spirit of equality and simplicity prevails. There is but little distinction of rank at any time observed; and even the deference paid to the claims of age and relationship among the other nations of the East are

here much less regarded. The greatest as well as the least enter a tent with the words of peace, and offering their hand, perhaps, to those whom they know, in token of amity, sit down without regard to place or person, or any of those ceremonies and etiquettes so scrupulously adhered to by the rules of Persian politeness; and they sit and loll, or stretch themselves out, quite at their ease, and evidently without being sensible of violating any received rule of good manners."

What surprised Vámbéry most during his sojourn amongst the Turcomans was his "inability to discover any single man among them desirous of commanding, or any individual inclined to obey. The tribes have, it is true, their Aksakals, but these are, in effect, merely ministers to each particular circle, standing, to a certain degree, in a position of honourable distinction. They are liked and tolerated so long only as they do not make their supremacy felt by unusual commands or extravagant pretensions." With regard to the titles borne by Turcomans, Arsky says that among the Tekkes "Sardar signifies an experienced guide, or, more accurately still, a leader of expeditions, knowing accurately the road to the region usually ravaged, the wells on the way, and the best localities for obtaining booty. In starting on a foray the co-operation of a Sardar is always solicited, and when the distribution of the plunder takes place he receives one share in excess of the rest. The Eeshan is a holy person, the same as a Moollah in the rest of the Mussulman world. He acts as judge for the people, being in this respect like the Mussulman Shariot elsewhere. The cases

that come under his notice refer to civil litigation. The only criminal offence recognised in Akhal is murder, to expiate which, as a rule, the guilty party pays the relatives of the victim a fine of 3,000 krans. The rest of the crimes and offences are subjected to no tribunal whatever, and are settled peaceably among the parties interested themselves; the amount of recompense, and its nature, being arranged by mutual agreement. The title of Khan possesses no special significance in the Tekke region. Imitating the Persians and Khivans, the people give the title without distinction to all individuals enjoying any influence in a camp, fortress, or settlement, although, at the same time, the affix is constantly found attached to the names of ordinary persons having no influence whatever."

Continues Vámbéry: "'How, then,' the reader will inquire, 'can these notorious robbers'—and the savageness of their nature is really unbounded—live together without devouring each other?' The position in which they stand is really surprising; but what shall we say to the fact that, in spite of all this seeming anarchy, in spite of all their barbarism, so long as enmity is not openly declared, *less robbery and murder, fewer breaches of justice and of morality*, take place amongst them than amongst the other nations of Asia whose social relations rest on the basis of Islam civilisation? The inhabitants of the desert are ruled, often tyrannised over, by a mighty sovereign, invisible indeed to themselves, but whose presence is plainly discerned in the word *deb*—custom, usage.

"*Deb* is a word of Arabian origin, derived from *edeb*

—'morality.' Among the Turcomans the *deb* is obeyed, and everything is practised or abominated according to its injunctions. It is very remarkable how little it has suffered in its struggle of eight centuries of Mahomedanism. Many usages, which are prohibited to the Islamite, and which the Moollahs make the object of violent attack, exist in all their ancient originality; and the changes effected by Islam, not only amongst the Turcomans, but amongst all the nomads of Middle Asia, were rather confined to the external forms of the religion previously existing. What they before found in the Sun, fire, and other phenomena of nature, they saw now in Allah-Mohammed: the nomad is ever the same, now as 2,000 years ago; nor is it possible for any change to take place in him till he exchanges his light tent for a substantial house; in other words, till he has ceased to be a nomad."

Petroosevitch observes that the Turcomans "have two restraints, force and *adat* (custom or *deb*); but they subserve even custom to their own inclinations, acting according to their personal interests, and not to those of the community. On this account all the Turcomans are foes to one another. The Yomoods are hostile to the Tekkes, the Tekkes to the Sariks, and so on. The rule of *adat* applies only to the relations between parents and children, and to such observances as marriage, funerals, the conduct of forays, the division of spoil, and to other such personal or family interests. No general laws prevail, if we except the regulations referring to the control and cleansing of canals. Such a state of society is due to the nomad character of the Turcomans, and their

ability to change one place of residence for another when circumstances seem to cramp them, or they become displeased with the regulations instituted by their neighbours. Among them exist Khans and Sardars, but they possess only influence, and influence is not authority.

"Still, the force of circumstances is as observable in Akhal and Merv as elsewhere. Encampments are giving way to regular settlements, clay dwellings inside gardens are replacing tents, and the power of their Aksakals, Khans and Sardars is on the increase, the latter being largely due to the custom of the Persian, Afghan and Bokharan authorities to deal only with titled representatives, who transmit their power, small though it may be, to their sons."

The improvement of the Turcomans may be explained on two grounds. Having no market for slaves, they are compelled to wage fewer forays and devote greater attention to horse-breeding and the cultivation of corn. Being themselves indisposed to labour, they retain in Akhal and Merv the Persian captives they used to sell as slaves in Khiva and Bokhara, and these unfortunate bondsmen spread among them the seeds of Khorassani civilization. It is gratifying for Englishmen to note the progress of the Turcomans, but they should applaud the Tekkes less and commiserate more with the Persian slaves, to whom this progress is really due.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WOMEN OF TURKMENIA.

Indifference of Turcomans to their wives.—Vámbéry's opinion of them.—Burnes' experiences of the Ersari damsels.—Conflicting views of their beauty.—Turcoman women at home.—A warning to peripatetic Lotharios.—What the women wear.—The Jubba.—Ornaments among the nomads.—How the women are treated by the men.—Household life.—Vámbéry and the hard-worked Turcoman woman.—Early marriages.—Boy-bridegrooms and girl-brides.—A reason against marrying old maids.—The value of a virgin.—Why a widow is preferred by the men to a maid.—The price of women in Turkmenia.—Curious divorce for a year after marriage.—"Stolen kisses taste the sweetest."—Marriage ceremonies.—Carrying off the bride.—Marriage-sports and horse-races.—Marriage by chase.—Elopements.—Why the Turcomans are not "very much married."—"Largeness of Turcoman families.—The law of divorce.—The chastity of Turcoman women.—Concubines.—The children of slave women.—The Eegs and the Kouls.

"The beauty of the Tekke women was the theme of every Turcoman I met."—ARSHY, 1879.

THE Turcomans, according to Ferrier, "bestow very little attention on their wives. They have for them, indeed, almost a feeling of contempt, allowing them full liberty to do as they please. They trouble

themselves very little about what licenses they indulge in, and if I may judge by the conduct of those who were, to the number of a thousand, brought prisoners to Teheran as hostages, these ladies are not particularly distinguished by their severity of manners; they are never veiled. The principal thing that interests the Turcoman with reference to the qualifications of his wife is, that she should diligently attend to the work of the house, or rather tent, and the superintendence of the crops and flocks; he cares little for anything else." Vámbéry, whose knowledge is larger and more recent, gives the women a better character than this:—"Indeed, the Turcoman women deserve respect, for nowhere in the East have I met with their equals in exemplary virtue, devotion to their families, and indefatigable industry."

Describing the Ersari tribe, Burnes remarks that, "for the first time in a Mahomedan country, we saw the ladies unveiled; but this is a prevalent custom throughout the Turcoman tribes. In no part of the world have I seen a more rude and healthy race of damsels in form or feature, though they are the countrywomen of the delicate Roxana, the bewitching queen of Alexander, whom he married in Transoxiana. Our Turcoman chief, Ernuzzer, to dissipate his ennui, fell in love with one of these beauties, and applied to me for a magical spell, which he did not doubt I could give him, to secure the girl's affections. I laughed at the old man's love and simplicity."

Elsewhere he says that the Turcoman women "are remarkably fair, and often handsome." Abbott saw "many pretty Turcoman women, but a beauty

must be a rarity. The style of countenance is decidedly European." And again: "Much has been said about the beauty of Turcoman women, but it probably consists of small sparkling eyes and a rosy complexion. Their features can seldom be regular or very delicate. By all accounts they are modest, though they do not conceal their faces. When a traveller enters a Yomood aoul he is accommodated in the public guest-tent, if there be one. If the camp is small there is probably no guest-tent, in which case he is admitted into the family tent of his host, where he finds the wife and children. At night, under veil of darkness, the several parties undress." Fraser "observed among the Goklans some young women remarkably handsome, with piercing black eyes, a nut-brown ruddy tint, and sweet, regular, intelligent countenances; nor was it easy to believe that the withered hags beside them could have once been lovely, fresh, and blooming like them; the children, too, were better-looking than their mothers, and many of them quite beautiful.

"The Turcoman women are not shut up or concealed like those of most Mahomedan countries, nor do they even wear veils; the only thing resembling them is a silken or cotton curtain which is worn tied round the face, so as to conceal all of it below the nose, and which falls down upon their breasts. They do not rise and quit the tent upon the entrance of a stranger, but continue occupied unconcernedly with whatever work they were previously engaged upon. They are, in truth, rather familiar with strangers, and have even the reputation of

being well disposed to regard them with peculiar favour; it is said, indeed, that they not unfrequently assume the semblance of allurement, with the treacherous intention of seducing the incautious stranger into improper liberties; upon which alarm is given, the men rush in, and, convicting their unhappy guest of a breach of the laws of hospitality, they doom him, without further ceremony, to death, or captivity, making a prize of all he may have possessed.

"The head-dress of these women is singular enough; most of them wear a lofty cap with a broad crown, resembling that sort of soldier's cap called a shako. This is stuck upon the back of the head, and over it is thrown a silk handkerchief of very brilliant colour, which covers the top and falls down on each side like a veil thrown back. The front of this is covered with ornaments of silver or gold, in various shapes; most frequently gold coins —*mohrs* or *toomans*—strung in rows, with silver bells or buttons, and chains depending from them; hearts and other fanciful forms with stones set in them; the whole gives rather the idea of gorgeous trappings for a horse, than ornaments for a female. The frames of these monstrous caps are made of light chips of wood, or split reeds covered with cloth; and when they do not wear these they throw a cloth around their heads in the same form, and carelessly throw another like a veil over it. The veil or curtain above spoken of covers the mouth, descending to the breast; ear-rings are worn in the ears, and their long hair is divided and plaited in four parts, disposed two on each side; one of which

falls down behind the shoulder and one before, and both are strung with a profusion of gold ornaments, agates, cornelians, and other stones, according to the means and quality of the wearer. The rest of their dress consists of a long vest or shirt, with sleeves, which covers the whole person down to the feet, and is open at the breast in front, but buttons or ties close up to the neck. This is made of silk or cotton stuff, red, blue, green, striped red and yellow, checked, or variously coloured. Underneath this are the *zere-jameh* or drawers, also of silk or cotton, and some wear short *peerahn* or shirt of the same. This, I believe, is all; but in the cold weather they wear, in addition, *jubbas*,* or coats like those of the men, of striped stuff made of silk or cotton. On their feet they generally wear slippers like those of the Persian women."

"The men," writes Conolly, "who have an overweening idea of the consequence of their sex, and of their part of it in particular, do little but lounge about and sleep, and the women perform all the labour. Early in the morning they milk the camels, bring water, make butter-milk, and gather bushes to bake bread. After noon they milk the sheep and goats, make curds, or prepare the milk for butter and

* "The *jubba* is a large wrapping gown, with sleeves, tight at the wrists, but wide above; open in front, and so wide as to admit of being folded round the body, the one side lapping broadly over the other; it very much resembles the *baraunce*, but is commonly made of coarser materials. The Khorassani *jubba* is most commonly made of brown or reddish grey woollen, and frequently of camel's hair. It is a very good external covering, its close texture not readily admitting the wet, and in great measure excluding the wind."

kooroot, and provide the evening meal. In their leisure hours they occupy themselves in sewing and knitting, or in carding wool. Then they weave carpets, and make felt cloths and horse-clothing, and prepare camel's hair for making *jubbas*. Many of them are assisted in their labour by slaves, who, for the most part, live very much like dogs. When men are seated conversing near them, the women draw up a small piece of cloth from their bosoms over their mouths, to signify that they take concern only in their own occupation." Vámbéry relates that "once, when I had, in the Atrek, obtained by begging a small sack of wheat, and was about to grind it in a handmill, the Turcomans around me burst into shouts of laughter. Shocked and surprised, I asked the reason of their scornful mirth, when one approached in a friendly manner and said: 'It is a shame for you to take in hand woman's work. But Moollahs and Hadjis are, of course, deficient in secular *savoir faire*, and one pardons them a great many such mistakes." Abbott adds that "the men and women never eat together."

"The children* are early married, the boys at the age of 14 years and the girls at that of 11 or 12 and before the age of puberty. The marriage is immediately consummated, and a tent is provided for the young pair, which is pitched near that of the boy's parents. It is considered a reproach to have an unmarried daughter to the age of 20 years, and such ladies are little in request as wives; for, as the Turcomans put it, 'their bosoms become so large.' The

* Abbott.

daughters of Turcomans are always purchased. If respectable, at not less than 100 tillas, or £70. If the first wife dies, the widower must pay double for the second, although the husband should be still a child. In return for the price bestowed, the bride is generally provided by her parents with furniture of proportionate value. A widow, if young, fetches a higher price, as being broken into the *manége*."

Fraser says "that a widow is worth ten times as much as a maid. Five camels is a common price for a girl; from 50 to 100 are often given for a woman who has been married, and is still in the prime of life. The reason assigned for this curious choice is, that the former is not supposed to be as yet by any means acquainted with the management of a family, or with the occupations and manufactures that render a woman valuable to her husband; and so great may be the difference of degree in this species of knowledge, that a woman known to excel in it will command the large price above stated."

According to Conolly, the price paid for a widow goes to her father. "Most commonly, virgins are given to unmarried lads; if a widower desires to wed a maiden, he must pay largely for her, which is a distinction that does not accord with Mahomedan law."

The reason that the Turcomans marry at such an early age is, remarks the same author, because "a man is less influential on account of his wealth than the number of his kindred, and it is, therefore, an object with them to strengthen themselves by extending their connections." There is no betrothing, but children, so young even as of 6 or 7 years of age

are ceremoniously married, and they live together after a proper interval. The girl brings her clothes, carpets, and the lighter articles of domestic furniture; the lad's father gives him a tent, some camels, and sheep, and perhaps a mare, according to his means. It sometimes happens that a man cannot afford to give his son a separate establishment, and he then takes the young man's wife into his own tent, until he is able to provide for him, or till he himself dies and bequeathes his establishment to him. When a son goes out from his father's tent, he cannot claim further inheritance, which is generally left to those living in the paternal tent. This is rather in accordance with old custom than with Mahomedan law." Vámbéry throws more light on the custom of newly married people being separated a whole year, which temporary divorce, he says, sometimes takes place two days after the nuptials and sometimes four days. "The husband is allowed to make his appearance in the house of his wife, but it must be only at night and in the most clandestine manner. In the opinion of the nomads, married life, in its beginning, is made all the more pleasant by acting up to the proverb, 'Stolen kisses taste the sweetest,' and hence also the belief that the first child must always be handsome and vigorous."

Conolly is the only author who describes elaborately the wedding festivities of the Turcomans: "It is known when two families are about to form an alliance, and some days before that fixed for the ceremony, friends of the parties ride to the outcampments, and bid guests to the wedding. They assemble, and ride in by twenties and thirties, and

when a party comes within a little distance of the camp, they put their horses into a gallop, and, riding with joyous shouts thrice round the tent of the bridegroom's father, they rein up at his door, and are welcomed with the usual compliments. Their horses are picketed outside the tents, and for that day they are the guests of the whole camp, a party in each tent. The next day, by noon, all the guests have arrived, and, from the tent of the bridegroom's father, a camel bearing *kajavahs* (a cradle to hold persons or goods on a camel's back), gaily tricked out, is sent with a party of men to the bride's tent. The damsel awaits them, reclining on a carpet outside the tent-door; in her hand is a cord, the other end of which is fastened to a horse-pin driven into the ground; she affects to sleep, and over her is thrown a cloth, in pretended concealment of her person. The bridegroom's men advance to carry her off, but she is defended by her male friends, who, armed with sticks, are very liberal of their blows to the opposite party. After having been tolerably well beaten in five or six attacks, the bridegroom's men exclaim against the rough treatment, and they are no longer resisted; they run with shouts to the girl, snatch her up, and, carrying her off to the camel, seat her in the *kajavah*, and convey her in triumph to a tent pitched next to the host's. The women are all busy preparing food; the men get together and amuse themselves, sitting in circles and listening to the melody of a pipe or a two-wired guitar; or they converse and tell stories, or play at odd or even, push each other about and halloo, or get up and wrestle in parties; and no small part of their amusement lies in

endeavouring to steal from each other as they sit. Spartan-like, they keep what they steal, and pride themselves on their dexterity.

"At even-fall they seat themselves round the bridal tent, and a Cazee coming calls for the two sponsors of the parties, and addresses them with these mock words: 'Assouffee Vussouffee Imaum-e-Azim Aboo Hunneefa, bickalitra sabit kon'; which means shortly, 'Prove your vakeel's commissions.' This raises a shout of merriment, and the vakeels, going away to a little distance, return and answer in like mock words—'We are proven.' When the mirth excited by this mummery has subsided, there is brought a bowl covered with a kerchief, on which is a piece of money; and on a tray, raisins or sweet rolls are brought, and distributed among the guests as bride-cake. The kerchief and the piece of money are the Cazee's fee. The marriage words being read, and the hands of the couple joined by the Cazee, the nuptial-cap is put on the girl's head, and, the ceremony being completed, the company wish the pair all sorts of *moobaricks* (happinesses), and they walk together into the tent, to show that they are 'one.' Then the rough sports are resumed, and a crier goes about on the part of the bridegroom's father, proclaiming races for the morrow, and inviting all to send their horses to the starting-ground. The horses are ridden by boys. Starting at first prayer-time (dawn of day), they keep up a long trot for two-thirds of the distance, when they change their pace to a canter. Long before they reach the goal, they are met by those interested in the race; the latter station themselves at intervals, and shout to encourage the

horses, which, now pressed into a gallop, come in to the winning-post amid the acclamations of the assembled crowd. To the owner of the winning horse a prize is awarded, which consists of mares, camels, or sheep, and sometimes money. This donation is proportionate with the wealth of the host; we heard instances of prizes to the value of 100 *tillas* (£65) having been given on such occasions by wealthy parents. Then there are races of less distances for younger horses, and a general plate for all untrained nags, for a distance of eight miles or so, the winners of which receive smaller prizes. Private races and bets are made; promising horses are sold or exchanged; and, as a Newmarket man would say, 'business is done.'

"On this day all are guests of the bridegroom's father. He provides rice, meat, flour, &c., and the women of the *oubeh* assist to cook it. The work of eating goes on during the best part of the day, flaps of bread and bowls of soup, or *pilaf*, being served up continually at the master's tent; the guests partake of the good cheer in relief parties, and then saddling their horses, make the parting compliments to the host, and return to their homes as they came. These 'gatherings' take place in the spring of the year, and the Turcomans look forward with much delight to the pleasures of this season."

Vámbéry says that there is a "marriage ceremonial where the young maiden, attired in bridal costume, mounts a high-bred courser, taking on her lap the carcase of a lamb or goat, and setting off at full gallop, is followed by the bridegroom and other young men of the party, also on horseback; but she is

always to strive, by adroit turns, &c., to avoid her pursuers, that no one of them approach near enough to snatch from her the burden on her lap. This game, called *kokburi* (green wolf), is in use amongst all the nomads of Central Asia." Burnes remarks, as "a result of the communications between the sexes being unrestrained, attachments are often formed that ripen into love. But the daughter of the Turcoman has a high price, and the swain, in despair of making a legitimate purchase, seizes his sweetheart, seats her behind him on the same horse, and gallops off to the nearest camp, where the parties are united, and separation is impossible. The parents and relatives pursue the lovers, and the matter is adjusted by an intermarriage with some female relation of the bridegroom, while he himself becomes bound to pay so many camels and horses as the price of his bride. If the person be rich, these are generally paid on the spot; but if, as more often happens, he is without property, he binds himself to discharge his debt, which is viewed as one of honour; and he proceeds on forays to Persia, till he has gained enough to fulfil his engagement. His success in these generally converts him into a robber for the rest of his days; and the capture of the Kizilbash has now become indispensable to settle in life the family of a Turcoman. The young lady, after her Gretna Green union, returns to the house of her parents, and passes a year in preparing the carpets and clothes which are necessary for a Turcoman tent; and on the anniversary of her elopement she is finally transferred to the arms and house of her gallant lover."

Few Turcomans take the complement of wives authorised by the Koran. Conolly did not see a tent in which there were more than two. The cause of this, Fraser opines, is the high price demanded for girls by their fathers. "Whether from this cause or not, I cannot say, but it is certain that their women are more prolific than others, even, as I was assured, in the proportion of two to one. I can myself assert that out of every Goklan camp we passed through, such crowds of children issued, that one of my servants, in amazement, cried out that it was 'like an ant-hill.' They were stout, healthy, hardy little creatures, almost naked, and it was admirable to see the courage and unconcern with which these infants, that seemed scarcely able to walk, would splash and plunge through streams that would have made an European mother scream. Everything about them told of the rough school in which they were receiving their education. My host, Kallee Khan, though by no means much advanced in life, had 10 fine sons, born of his two wives."

Regarding divorce, Conolly says that "putting a woman away is a thing hardly known among the Turcomans, and in this respect again they differ from the Arabs; for, according to Burckhardt, an Arab separates himself from his wife by the easy method of saying, 'Thou art divorced,' and giving her a she-camel to return to the tents of her family with. Thus, whenever he will be at the expense of a camel, a man may change his wife. The Turcomans either are fonder of their women, or they set greater store on their camels, for they have no such

law, and would think it bad economy to part with so useful a part of their establishment. For adultery either party may be killed by the freeman witness to the guilt, but nothing is more rare; for, not to say that the open way in which they live in camp prevents secret intercourse, the severity of the law and dread of the bloody feuds which would probably be consequent upon the injury, deter men from the commission of it. The chastity of the Turcoman women settled near the Persian border is a proverb; but there is this to be said, that no Kizilbash Lothario would be found hardy enough to venture into the desert to seduce them. Of the Turcoman ladies farther north, indeed, I heard stories, from Persians who had travelled among them; but a Persian's account of his *bonnes fortunes* is like a Frenchman's."

Writing about the Persian slaves, he observes:—"The Turcomans capture many beautiful women in Persia, but prefer making money by selling them in the markets of Khiva and Bokhara to taking them to wife.* The women of pure Tartar blood are proud of it, and ill-disposed to share their lands with a stranger, so that, for the sake of peace, a man will content himself with a wife or two of his own race. 'Women!' said a Turcoman female, in allusion to the Persian girls; 'do you call those thin-skinned daughters of the devil, women?' The condition of these poor captives must be very wretched, torn

* This is changed now. Having no market for the disposal of female captives, the Turcomans use them as concubines and household slaves.—C. M.

from their homes, and taken under every indignity and suffering through the desert, to be sold in the Uzbek markets. Sometimes a Turcoman allows the power of beauty to prevail over his love of lucre and he takes his captive to wife, but there are objections to this which will be presently shown. Of the passion of love, as civilised mortals imagine it, they have but a faint idea, and indeed, if they valued personal beyond other charms, they would soon be disappointed in their wives, for the hard labour that the latter perform soon causes them to lose the little beauty that can be found in a Tartar girl's face, and to appear wrinkled and aged. A really old Turcoman woman looks as if she were made of leather, and as much like a witch as any creature that can be imagined. Yet the old poets have written very pretty verses on the Tartar women, and the ancient kings of Persia used to send into Turkestan for beauties for their harems.

"The chief objection to a Turcoman's marrying a foreign woman lies in the very arbitrary laws that they have in regard to their progeny. A Turcoman may free his captive, but his issue by her and their descendants bear for ever the name of Koul (literally, slaves), though they live among, and on general terms of equality with the Eegs or free-born. Among the Kouls again, there are gentle and simple. The son of a foreign woman by a Turcoman father is merely a Koul, but for the child of the slave married to a slave, there is an inferior designation, *dôgmah*. As there is no outward difference between Eegs and Kouls, a stranger coming to an *oba* would not know one from the other, except, perhaps, he might

guess, from the thicker beard or handsomer features of a man, that he had not the honour to come altogether of a beardless and noseless race.

"In speaking of a Koul, a man will say, 'Koul-e Otaboi, Koul-e Eelghi,' &c. The term is not one of more reproach than 'peasant' is with us; but the Turcomans of unmixed descent do not, from old prejudice, intermarry with them, and retain certain privileges, the greatest of which extends even to the life of a Koul, which an Eeg may take without entailing on himself the blood-feud which would be the consequence of his killing a freeman. On this account it is not considered safe to travel with a Koul, because he cannot defend you against an Eeg who may wish to injure you. By a strange Chinese idea of retaliation, though an Eeg may kill a Koul with personal impunity, the clan to whom the murdered man belonged consider themselves warranted in slaying a Koul from the aggressor's tribe in lieu; but this privilege has its limits, for the freemen, esteeming their honour concerned in the protection of the Kouls who live with them, resent an abuse of it; and, wedded as the Turcomans are to old customs, this one will probably become less influential, as the Kouls already form a large majority among the tribes."

CHAPTER IX.

CAMELS, DOGS, AND HUNTING.

Fraser's account of the Turcoman camel.—Difference between the breeds.—Burnaby's opinion of the camel as a beast of burden.—Captain Potto and the camel in steppe campaigns.—Burnes' experiences with camels in his journey from Bokhara to Merv.—Enormous waste of camels by Russia.—Vámbéry and the virtues of Turcoman camels.—The camel's thorn.—Drawbacks to camel-transport in hilly districts.—The Turcoman dromedary.—Kajavahs.—Riding on camel-back.—Dogs.—The mastiffs at Merv.—Partridge hunting.—Wild asses and antelopes.—Boars in the Atrek region.—November scenes in the delta of the Atrek.—Spiders as big as a mouse.—Half-a-million birds.—Water-snakes in the desert.

The camel is found in vast herds at Merv."—Burnes.

"It is remarkable that the Turcomans know, by the footsteps in the desert, the person who has been there, nay the very tribe of Turcomans that has passed. They have an extraordinary power of smelling. Said one to me, 'I smell a caravan of Uzbeks,' and in a few hours a caravan from Khiva arrived full of them."—Wolff.

"Habit enables the Turcoman to determine with great exactness, by the traces of a caravan, the time that has elapsed since it was at any place, and with regard to route, old Peerwullee, who certainly was not among the most sagacious of his tribe, led us day and night in as true a direction as if he had laid his points down by a compass."—Conolly.

"If we exclude their horses,* the most valuable possession of the Turcomans is their camels; of these there are bred among them and generally in Khorassan, three principal sorts; those with one hump and those with two humps being the stock kinds; the latter (or dromedary) is slight and swift, but being less powerful as a beast of burden, it is less valuable than the other kinds, and only sells for from eighty to one hundred Persian rupees. The former, which is in more general use, will carry loads of from sixty to a hundred maunds Tabreez (from 450 lbs. to 700 lbs. English), according to its size and strength; and it sells at from 120 to 140 Persian rupees. But the third sort, which is bred between these two, is greatly preferred before either of its parents, being uncommonly patient, docile, and strong; they grow to a very large size, are low in proportion to their bulk, with short, stout, long legs, and a large quantity of shaggy hair upon their necks, shoulders, haunches, or the crown of the head. These animals will carry from 100 to 150 Tabreez maunds (700 lbs. to 1,100 lbs. English), and they sell at from 160 to 200 rupees apiece. I believe they do not permit these to breed among themselves, because the produce, instead of partaking of its parent's temper, becomes extremely vicious and dangerous. The colour of these, as indeed of both the other breeds, varies from a light grey to a brown colour, more or less dark."

Captain Burnaby says, in his *Ride to Khiva*, that "the power of camels to carry burdens is much exaggerated, and although a strong beast will carry

* Fraser.

800 pounds day after day for a short journey, he very soon breaks down if you should increase the march. I had reduced the weight carried by my own to 400 pounds per camel, and even with this light load had great difficulty in making them march sixteen hours a day."

A Russian officer, Captain Potto, remarks in his work, *Steppe Campaigns*:—"The weight of a camel-load should be limited to 700 pounds. This load is generally diminished in the spring, when the camels are casting their coats, and increased when the roads are good, when there is plenty of forage, and when no great speed is required. Then the load may be increased to 800, and even 880 pounds, which is about the weight with our traders' caravans. On the other hand, the English calculate the normal load at 560 pounds, and the French and Arabs at from 800 to 960 pounds.

Burnes, in his journey from Bokhara to Merv, speaks of the pace of the camels being 2⅛ miles an hour (3,740 yards.) He adds: "I have since found, that the judicious Volney assigns the distance of 3,600 yards as the hourly journey of a camel in the sands of Egypt and Syria."

Further on, in the journey from Merv to Sarakhs, he observes:—"The camels sometimes stepped out at the rate of 2½ miles an hour, which I had never seen before. All the camels were males, since they are believed to undergo fatigue better than females." In another place: "Camels move quickest at night, or in the cool of the morning, and flag after a march of 25 miles."

The Russians, who have used up at least 40,000

camels in their campaigns in Transcaspiana since 1869, have nothing but abuse to shower upon their heads; but Vámbéry thinks it "no wonder that the wanderers over the desert praise the camel as surpassing all other beasts of the field, and even love it with an almost adoring affection. Nourished on a few thorns and thistles, which other quadrupeds reject, it traverses the wastes for weeks, nay, often for months together. In those dreary, desolate regions, the existence of man depends upon that of the camel. It is, besides, so patient and so obedient that a child can with one '*tsheckh*,' make a whole herd of these tall strong beasts kneel down, and with a '*berer*' get up again. How much could I not read in their large dark-blue eyes! When the march is too long or the sand too deep, they are accustomed to express their discomfort and weariness. This is especially the case when they are being laden, if too heavy bales are piled upon their backs. Bending under the burden, they turn their heads round towards their master, in their eyes gleam tears, and their groans, so deep, so piteous, seem to say, 'Man, have compassion upon us.'"

"Camels * are particularly fond of a kind of thorn, *khar-i-shutar* (camel's thorn), which grows in great abundance on the Asiatic steppes, so that arriving at a halt, it is only necessary to turn them loose and they help themselves. Sometimes the drivers will give them once in the day a ball of barley-flour as large as a man's fist, but it is not always done, and they get on very well without it. In Bactria, camels

* Ferrier.

attain a strength and development perfectly extraordinary. They are used only as beasts of burden, and carry from 6 to 8 cwt. ; but it is an animal that can only be used with advantage in a level country, where the soil is dry. The foot not being protected by a hoof, these animals cannot step with the necessary firmness in a rugged, hilly country; they frequently fall, never to rise again, for they easily dislocate, or even break their limbs, which are very brittle. In such a case there is no remedy, the animal must be killed on the spot, and Asiatics often eat the flesh."

" The dromedary,* reared by the Turcomans, is a noble creature. Its strength is greater than that of the Indian dromedary, and its appearance of power is increased by the huge tufts of hair, which grow upon the muscles of the legs, and cover the neck. The intermediate breed is more powerful than either, and has generally, I believe, two humps. The dromedary will carry a burden of 600 pounds, at the rate of thirty miles a day, for almost any distance; provided that it be supplied with a sufficiency of the oil cake upon which alone it is fed, grain being considered too expensive. It walks under a burden about two and one-third miles an hour."

" Kajavahs are boxes,† or rather cradles, formed of wooden frames, covered with cloth or leather, from 3½ to 4 feet long, by 4 feet high, in which those who travel upon camels are seated; they are partly open in front, and when fitted up with bedding, make a conveyance by no means contemptible on a cold

* Abbott. † Fraser.

night, for those who can sit for many hours together in the Asiatic fashion, with their legs doubled or crossed under them. The traveller becomes soon accustomed to the measured motion of a camel's pace, and thus can enjoy both warmth and sleep, blessings most enviable during the long and wearisome nights of a winter's journey, and which those who travel on horse-back are totally deprived of. Each camel carries two of these baskets, or cradles, which are hung like panniers, one on each side." Conolly found the motion of the kajavahs to be very distressing. "These cribs were but four feet by two, and when we had contrived to dispose of our bodies in this small space so as not to be in torture, our remaining skill was needed to preserve the centre of gravity; for the kajavahs were only loosely slung over the camel's back, and the very act of rising to draw a cramped leg from under one might have sufficed to destroy the balance. The motion had the effect of giving me a severe headache, which I should have minded more had I not been kept in laughter at the alarm of my friend in the other pannier. We were frequently obliged to spring up and clutch each other, as one or other crib leaned over; and he took infinite pains to show how, by my giving too much of my weight on one side, he might be made to fly over my head and break his bones."

"For the protection* of their flocks, the Turcomans have a breed of very large and fierce dogs, which assist their shepherds, like those of our own, in managing their flocks, and which watch around

* Fraser.

them at night. Without such vigilant watchers it would be impossible, so surrounded by nations of thieves, to preserve for a single night either national or individual property; *with* them it is almost impossible for a thief to carry off anything whatever, without the alarm being given. One or more of these dogs sleep under the wall of each house, so that none can enter or leave it undiscovered by its inmates.

"They have another breed of dogs, which perform the office of our pointers; finding the game by scent, and stealing upon it so softly as not to alarm it, until the hunter sees it, and kills it on the ground, or the dog itself catches it, for few can shoot a bird on the wing. These dogs vary in appearance, but I have seen some not unlike the more slender kinds of our smooth pointers. A few of the richer individuals among the Turcomans, and many of the nobles of Khorassan, keep a sort of greyhound, with long silky hair on the quarters, shoulders, ears, and tail, which has great speed, and with which they course antelopes and hares; no strict Mussulman, however, will eat the latter." The dogs seen by Burnes at Merv, were shaggy, and appeared to be of the mastiff breed. They were very docile, but ferocious to strangers, and bore a high price among the Turcomans.

The Turcomans are fond of running down partridges. This, Burnes observes, "is an easier matter than would be at first imagined, as the number captured soon proved. These birds, called *kubk* by the Turcomans, fly one or twice, seldom thrice, and are then picked up. The Turcomans were delighted with the sport, and I participated in

their excitement, though I did not join in it. The long spears with which they were armed, their great activity, and the horsemanship which they displayed, gave, what I imagined to be, a just resemblance to their 'tchapao,' when in search of human beings. At a gallop, a Turcoman cavalier leans forward on his saddle, which gives him an air of eagerness that is singularly interesting. The whole scene was worthy of the ancient Parthia, the very country that we now traversed."

"The wild ass,* roams in herds of two to three hundred throughout the Turcoman deserts. He is not the animal described in Scripture, but a much tamer creature, differing, indeed, very little in appearance from the tame variety. Those which dwell amongst the mountains, are fleet and wild; but, when found in herds, the wild ass exhibits little speed, and when pressed, stops and bites, or kicks at the rider's horse. The flesh is eaten by Tartars and Persians, and was the favourite food of the Persian hero Roostum. I found the desert absolutely manured with the dung of these animals, and trampled by their hoofs. They feed upon wormwood.

"In the Turcoman deserts is a species of antelope almost as numerous as the wild ass. It is smaller than a sheep, which it resembles in body, neck, and head; having the delicate limbs, the hair and horns of the antelope. The horn, however, is not opaque, but white, and like a white cow's horn, the nostrils are directly in front, and closed by a muscle acting

* Abbott.

vertically. The nose is greatly arched, and provided with a loose integument, which can be inflated at pleasure. The head is extremely ugly. The animal, which I have never seen elsewhere, is called by the natives *kaigh*."

In the Atrek region immense numbers of boars abound. The Turcomans rarely kill them, considering them unclean. Mr. O'Donovan, describing his November journey in 1879, from Tchikishlar to Astrabad, says that the marshes at the mouth of the Atrek were "literally covered with water-fowl of every description, principally wild duck, goose, and cormorant. Flamingoes, swans, and cranes were in abundance; and heavy, lazy-looking vultures squatted about by the dozen, devouring the stranded fish which at all times cover the marshes."

In an earlier journey up the Atrek to Fort Tchat, the Correspondent saw "scores of large black hawks wheeling high in the air. I believe they subsist on the mice which abound, and on stranded fish. The most objectionable frequenters of the place are scorpions and enormous tarantula spiders. The latter, known here as the phalange, is as large as an ordinary mouse, of a chocolate colour, marked with black stripes and patches. One is obliged to look carefully into one's coat-sleeves, boots, &c., before dressing, lest some of these ugly and really dangerous creatures should have found lodgings there. They frequent the tents, where the flies gather largely, and seem to be most active at night, especially when a camp fire or candle has been lit."

In traversing the plain between Tchikishlar and

Akhal in the summer, the Russian soldiers found it bare of water and vegetation, and suffered terribly from the heat. O'Donovan describes its appearance in January :—" The plain north of the Atrek, which, when I last saw it, was a most appalling waste, is now fresh and green. The shrubs, which during summer resemble so many hearth-brooms, are now in leaf, and even some few flowers are to be met with. From time to time flocks of forty or fifty pin-tailed grouse, or *birneltek*, as the Turcomans call them, spring up almost from under one's feet. These birds are as large as a small turkey, and are excellent to eat. Strangely enough the Turcomans seldom take the trouble to shoot them, preferring to subsist on their eternal *pilaf* of rice or millet, with mutton boiled to shreds. There is another kind of bird also which occurs in vast flocks. It is like a small partridge, of a silver grey colour. The Turcomans style it the *goolgororouk*, from the peculiar croaking cry it utters on the wing. I have seen flocks of these birds which cannot have numbered less than half a million. Save during the migration of the wild pigeon in America, I have never seen so many birds together. One of these flocks, seen at a distance of a couple of miles, is easily mistaken for an approaching storm cloud. When disturbed, the entire flock take wing simultaneously with a roaring sound like that of a high wind among trees, or the fall of breakers on a distant beach. These birds, too, are excellent eating, but, like the grouse, are neglected by the nomads. The great rain-pools, some over a mile in diameter, are covered with wild duck and geese. Herons, cranes, and storks are to be seen

preying on the large greyish-green water-snakes which have come from heaven knows where, and multitudes of land-tortoises swim about, taking to the water as naturally as tortoises. I have occasionally seen them caught with a hook and line. Where these reptiles manage to exist during the sultry season, when not a drop of water is to be found anywhere on the dusty plains, it is difficult to imagine. It is quite possible that the water-snakes have come from the Caspian. I have often seen them at Krasnovodsk leave the sea, and travel miles inland over the parched red rocks. In fine, the desert, which I had last beheld so bleak and barren, is now replete with vegetable and animal life. This shows to what these plains might be converted could an adequate amount of irrigation be secured. Who knows what may be the ultimate effect of turning the Oxus back to its ancient channel?"

CHAPTER X.

THE TURCOMAN HORSE.

Colonel C. M. McGregor's opinion of the Turcoman horse.—The horse for India.—The Tekke horse a cause of the forays.—Effects of Turcoman pasturage upon horseflesh.—The food of the Turcoman horse.—His origin.—Appearance.—Contrasted with the Arab and English horse.—The Yomood breed.—Its characteristics.—How Tamerlane established the Turcoman breed of horses.—The steeds of the tribes living between Merv and Herat.—Food, weights, and pace on a journey.—Enormous distances traversed by the Turcoman horse.—Six hundred miles in six days.—Messengers between Khiva and Merv.—Horse-races.—Exploits of the Turcoman horse.—How they fight in time of action.—Fate of the best bloods.—Cost of a Turcoman horse.—Colonel Valentine Baker and the Tekke horse-dealers.—How the Turcoman horse is reared.—Preparing the charger for the desert foray, or raid into Persia.—No stables in Turkmenia.—How the horses are clothed in winter.—The sweating process.—Riding towards Persia.—The love of the Turcoman for his steed.—A curious illustration of the purity of the Turcoman breed.—Stallions.—Plan for improving their carriage.—Colonel Baker's *Merv*.—Russia's acquisition of Turcoman horses.—The Cossacks and Turcomans.—Future of the breed.

"The Turcoman and his horse are inseparable: take away the horse from the Tekke, and he no longer possesses the power of terrorising over his neighbour. Hence, if ever we conquer Merv, besides imposing a money con-

tribution, we ought to take from the Tekkes all their best stallions and mares. They would then at once cease to be formidable."—Colonel Grodekoff.

The Turcoman horses are, in the opinion of Colonel C. M. McGregor, "one of the few things in that imposture, Central Asia, that come up to their reputation, and are far and away the best Oriental horses, after Arabs, that I have seen. In some respects they are superior; in stature and bone they approach the English horse. Some of them range up to 16 hands, and they have very fine crests; they are, in fact, rather like an English carriage-horse. They are very enduring, and are altogether fine animals; the worst point being a deficiency of bone below the knee, which makes them unsuitable for carrying heavy weights, if the pace is at all fast. But for chargers for light weights, or for ladies' horses in India, they would be most suitable."

General Ferrier thinks that the "Turcomans would never venture to advance so far over the Persian border to make their forays, if they did not possess so fine a breed of horses, on which they bestow more care than upon their wives and children—it is more than tenderness, it is an absorbing passion which they feel for that noble animal. It is a sin in their eyes to maltreat him, and he who commits that crime incurs the reproaches of the whole tribe. A horse is to the Turcoman what a ship is to the pirate, it carries himself and his fortunes. In his saddle he is in his fortress; in truth it is on horseback that he fights; there is no instance of a tribe having ever voluntarily retired within the walls of a

town to defend themselves from their enemy.* To this feeling and their wild mode of warfare, they owe their security quite as much as to the clumsy system pursued by the Persians, in endeavouring to reduce them to obedience.

"The steppes of Turkmenia are very favourable to the development of the equine race; the pasturage and artificial grasses grow in dry soils, having no other nourishment than the winter snows. The fodder thus produced is much more sweet and nutritious than that of our more moist and temperate climate. It produces in their horses a higher temperature and better condition of the blood, as well as a peculiar elasticity and strength of nerve and muscle perfectly wonderful. Green food is produced on these steppes only in the spring; at that season the Turcomans refrain from making any expeditions, and this state of abnegation continues to the end of July. During this period they have time to gather in their crops, and their animals rest those limbs which have so well done their duty the previous season. From the month of August up to the winter they are kept on dry food. This consists of seven pounds of barley per diem, mixed with dry chopped straw, lucerne, *sainfoin*, or clover-hay, unless a tchapao is coming off, in which case the horse is put upon half forage.

"The Turcoman horses are a modification of the Arab breed, and as good in every respect as the famous horses of the desert. They differ, however,

* "The defence of Dengeel Tepé in 1879 was, I believe, the first exception to this rule."—C. M.

in respect to height, and their form is more developed; but I must admit that their outline is not so pleasing to the eye. Their neck is long, straight, and proudly curved, is almost always slender, but terminated by too long a head. The chest is generally narrow, and the legs are rather long and slender to carry a large but well-proportioned carcase, though occasionally a little too long."

Fraser thinks that hardly "any one accustomed to the symmetry of the Arab, or even the English horse, would consider them handsome; the impression they at first give is, that they are deficient in compactness, their bodies are long in proportion to their breadth and bulk of carcase, and they are not often well *ribbed-up*; their legs are long, and might be deficient in muscle, generally falling off below the knee; they have narrow chests, nor is their general breadth at all remarkable; their necks are long, their heads large, heavy, and seldom well put on; nor does the general appearance give the spectator the idea of activity or fleetness. Such was the first impression conveyed to me by the sight even of the superior horses of the Turcomans; perhaps the rather low condition they are for the most part kept in, increased its unfavourable nature; and it was not for some time that the effect began to wear off, and the fine and valuable points of the animal to force themselves into observation. They have large and powerful quarters, resembling those of the English horse; the shoulders are often fine, their legs clean and strong, and though generally spare of flesh, what they have is firm and good, and their size, unburdened with a load of fat, renders them

fit to support the weight of their rider and his burden for an astonishing length of time. I do not by any means intend to assert that the want of beauty is universal—on the contrary, I have seen some of the Turcoman horses very handsome; and when they are in good condition, and well groomed, they certainly have a great deal of figure, and on the whole, approach more to the character of the English horse than any other breed I have seen in the East."

Major Abbott describes the Yomood horse as averaging "perhaps about fifteen hands in height, generally well formed, and remarkable for the strength of his sinews. These are very widely separated from the bone, and sometimes to a degree which, although it adds to the power, detracts from the symmetry of the limbs. His head shows much blood. He is tractable and gentle, but full of fire. His powers of endurance are very great, and he will eat the driest and most unpalatable fodder, and thrive upon the wormwood of the desert.

"At sight of a mare, or even of a gelding, the Turcoman horses become frantic. They rise upon their hind legs, spring upon one another with a degree of fury than can be imagined only after having been once witnessed; at other times they are perfectly gentle, and being accustomed to be ridden in compact bodies, they very rarely bite or kick one another."

"It* is a tradition in Turkmenia, that the Turcoman and Arab horses were crossed at a very

* Ferrier.

remote period; but breeding on a very large scale took place when the first sectarian followers of Islam conquered Persia. Tamerlane, that prince of irregular cavalry commanders, introduced new blood by dispersing amongst the tribes 4,200 mares, which he had selected in Arabia from the very best breeds. After this, Nadir Shah renewed this cross with 600 mares, which he confided exclusively to the Tekkes. The horses of this tribe are held in the highest estimation in all Turkmenia, especially those from the district of Akhal." This, Fraser believes, is "because, being in greater numbers, there is a more extensive choice among them, for the breeds are the same among them all." Next in reputation to the Tekke horse, is that of the Yomood and Goklan Turcomans. The Hazara and Djemshidi tribes, living between Herat and Merv, possess horses, in the opinion of Colonel Grodekoff, not inferior to the Tekke breed. This is due, he says, "to the improvement effected by the frequent raids of those tribes into the Merv district, and the capture of Tekke mares and stallions."

"The Turcoman horses * are ridden upon a single snaffle, and, of course, are somewhat unmanageable at speed. Mares are never ridden by Turcomans; it is considered unseemly to ride a mare. On journeys, they get about 10 lbs. each of barley, or eight of *juwaree*, or whatever fodder (it is generally very scanty) the desert may supply. They will live on this food for many days, carrying water and grain for themselves and their masters, and the clothing of both."

* Abbott.

"They * are taught a quick walk, a light trot, or a sort of amble, which carries the rider on easily at the rate of six miles an hour; but they will also go at a round canter, or gallop, for 40 or 50 miles, without ever drawing bridle or showing the least symptom of fatigue."

Ferrier affirms that the extraordinary distances which some of these horses will travel at a stretch, is scarcely to be credited. "I have heard a Turcoman relate most marvellous stories of their powers of endurance; for instance, that he has known a horse go six hundred miles in six, or even five days.† As to my own knowledge, I can affirm that I saw one of these animals—the property of Habib Ullah Khan, general-in-chief of the artillery—go from Teheran to Tabreez, return, and again reach Tabreez, in twelve days; the distance being 420 miles. But from this, three days must be deducted, the horse having been allowed 24 hours' rest after each journey."

Abbott, who himself passed numbers of Turcoman horsemen on his way from Herat to the Caspian, asserts that "a mounted messenger will cover the 360 miles that intervene between Merv and Khiva in six days, on the same animal, carrying on his crupper 60 lbs. of barley, 20 lbs. of horse-clothes, and food and water for his own use." Burnes had "authentic accounts of Turcoman horses performing a journey of 600 miles in seven, or even six, days. Speed is at all times looked on as an inferior quality to bottom. At the marriage festivals, where horse-races form a

* Fraser.

† Fraser and Grodekoff confirm this.—C. M.

part of the amusement, the Turcomans decide their matches, which are generally a few sheep, on a course of twenty or twenty-five miles. Youths of eight and ten years of age ride the horses; and the spirit with which these sports are carried on by Turcomans is not surpassed in any country. The favourite horse afterwards moves throughout the neighbourhood as if the owner had the encouragement of a farming association in the deserts of Turkmenia."

A Turcoman with whom Fraser was talking on this subject, "with reference to his own horse, offered to go from Meshed to Teheran, or to Bokhara, neither of which journeys is less than 500 miles, in six days at the farthest; and the possibility of the feat was confirmed by hundreds, both Persians and Turcomans; indeed the distances to which their tchapaos have frequently extended, prove too fatally that the power exists. But I have reason to believe that their *yaboos* or galloways, and large ponies are fully remarkable, if not superior to their large horses, in their powers of sustaining fatigue; they are stout, compact, and spirited beasts, without the fine blood of the larger breeds, but more within the reach of the poorer classes, and consequently used in by far greater numbers than the superior and more expensive horses. It is a common practice of the Turcomans to teach their horses to fight with their heels, and thus assist their master in the time of action, and, at the will of their rider, to run at, and lay hold of with their teeth whatever men or animals may be before them. This acquirement is useful in the day of battle and plunder, for catching prisoners and

stray cattle, but renders them vicious and dangerous to strangers."

According to Ferrier:—"When a Turcoman horse has given great proofs of strength and endurance in a tchapao or foray, he never leaves the tribe except by force of arms. With the exception of the Shah of Persia and more particularly Assaf Doulet, Governor-General of Khorassan, and a few Uzbek princes, there are few persons in Asia who possess the real and best-bred horses of the Turcoman breed. They have not been sold to them, but have been wrung from the chiefs of tribes as presents, or taken in some sudden onslaught. The reader will understand the value a Turcoman sets upon a horse that he has bred, when I state that the second best of the best breed, which they will occasionally consent to sell, cannot be purchased for less than from £120 to £160. A useful and excellent horse may, however, be had, of inferior breed, for £40 to £48. Fourteen guineas will also purchase an ordinary animal, which in Europe would be thought not a bad sort of horse, and certainly worth three or four times its value in Turkestan."

Fraser's opinion on this point is, that "animals of the best breeds cannot be had under a sum of money equal to £150 or £200 sterling. For some of remarkable blood and beauty, I have heard £350 to £400 demanded; and nothing possessing the most moderate degree of goodness, united with size and figure, can be had under £50 to £100 sterling. Common horses, good enough for drudges, but with no degree of blood, nor belonging to the favourite Turcoman breeds, may be had at small enough

prices, but even good yaboos, bred in the desert, will sell for £30 to £40 sterling." A Turcoman horse-dealer told Colonel Valentine Baker that he could undertake to deliver 1,000 Tekke horses in 10 days, and 15,000 in three months, at an average rate of £20 a head, suitable for cavalry mounts in India.

Conolly humorously remarks that "when a Turcoman sells a horse to one of his own people, he specifies (if necessary) the places it is not to be taken to; and if the buyer neglect the caution, and the animal is claimed at any one of them, the loss is his own. But if the seller does not warn a purchaser against any place, and the horse is there proved a stolen one, he must refund the purchase-money. This is very like Yorkshire."

Burnes gives a description of the rearing of the Turcoman horse:—"The peculiar manner in which a Turcoman rears his horse arrests attention, and will, perhaps, account for its stamina and superiority; since education, whether of the beast or the man, leaves the most permanent impression. The diet is of the simplest kind, and entirely free from the spices and sugars, the 32 and 42 *mussalas* (condiments) of the Indians. Grass is given at stated periods in the forenoon, evening, and midnight; and, after feeding on it for an hour, the horse is reined up, and never permitted to nibble and eat, as in Europe. Dry food is preferred at all times; and if green barley and *juwaree* are given in its stead, the animal then receives no grain. At other times, a horse has from eight to nine pounds of barley once a day. Clover and artificial grasses

are cultivated in Bokhara and on the banks of the Oxus, and, when procurable, always used in a dry state. The stalk of the *juwaree*, which is as thick as a walking-stick, and contains much saccharine juice, is a more favourite food. The long interval between the times of baiting inures these horses to great privation. The supply of water allowed to them is also most scanty. Before a Turcoman undertakes a foray he trains, or, to use his own expression, 'cools his horse,' with as much patience and care as the most experienced jockey of the turf; and the animal is sweated down with a nicety which is perhaps unknown to these characters. After long abstinence from food, the horse is smartly exercised, and then led to water. If he drinks freely, it is taken as a sign that his fat has not sufficiently been brought down, and he is starved and galloped about till he gives this required and indispensable proof. A Turcoman waters his horse when heated, and then scampers about with speed, to mix the water and raise it to the temperature of the animal's body! Under this treatment, the flesh of the horses becomes firm, and their bottom is incredible."

Ferrier says that "a Turcoman horse never sees a stable; he is always picketed in the open air, and clothed in felt rugs. Those which are sold to a person living in a town are kept in stables during the winter, but tied with head-and-heel ropes in the court-yard or fields when the sun has a little warmth. With the exception of the period they are at grass, they are well exercised every day, and will work well for twenty, aye, and twenty-

five years. These famous animals resist cold as well as heat; they are accustomed to drink at all times, even when covered with perspiration—but in this case they take care to give them a gallop afterwards. Without this precaution they might have inflammation, and the Turcomans assert that if they did not adopt it, the skin where the saddle had been would puff up like a bladder."

"In winter * the Turcoman horse is swaddled in three thick felts of sheep's and goat's wool, which are impervious to wind and rain; and is left out in the open air day and night. At night the snow is piled around him, as a further protection. In so dry a climate this is far better for him than the confined air of a stable; and he preserves the sleekness of his skin throughout the winter."

"The Turcomans † prepare a horse for a foray by exercising him most severely after a long abstinence from food and water. This brings the animal to a matchless state of hardihood. They do not permit them to taste green forage, but confine them to dry food, which they believe hardens the flesh. They sweat them till their fat entirely disappears, and of this they judge by the quantity of water which the horse drinks, since it is very small if his flesh has been properly reduced. The Turcoman horse, with such a training, far surpasses in bottom those of Europe and Arabia." Fraser adds:—"They sweat them until every particle of fat has been removed, and the flesh becomes hard and tendinous; of which they judge by the feel of the muscles, par-

* Abbott. † Burnes.

ticularly on the crest, at the back of the neck, and on the haunches; and when these are sufficiently firm and hard, they say in praise of the animal that his 'flesh is marble.'"

"When they are going beyond the plain country,* they shoe them, which they do not at other times. Their longest expeditions are undertaken in spring and autumn. With a bag of flour and some oil-cakes, a few *kooroot* balls, and a water-skin for their own use, and a small bag of barley, or *juwaree* for their horses, they set out on a distant foray. Their pace is alternately a *yoortmah* (or gentle jog-trot) and a long walk. Every hour or two they halt, and let their horses graze if there be herbage, (themselves perhaps snatching a few moments' sleep) and occasionally they give them a handful of corn. Marching on thus unceasingly to the point they have in view, they get over much ground in a few days, and their horses', and, indeed, their own steady endurance of fatigue is wonderful. They have the excitement which attends a dangerous service to keep up their spirits, and, pretty sure of booty if they can get within reach of Persians, they forget their fatigues in thinking of their probable gains. It is a chance if their enemies hear anything of them till they have crossed the border, and then they are more likely to get out of the way than to muster to oppose them."

"Since the life and fortune of the Turcoman are identified with the goodness of his horse," Burnes believes we can easily "account for the care and

* Conolly.

attention that he bestows upon him. The little food to which he is inured enables his rider to provide with ease for his own wants; he carries grain for his horse and himself as well as bread and flour: in his advance he sometimes buries these in a well known place, till he returns from the foray; and, when the Turcoman retreats into his native desert, he is thus supplied with provisions, though he may have been weeks from his camp, which he can share with the victims of his capture, whom he drags into miserable servitude. The breed of the Turcoman horse is of the purest kind. When the animal is over-heated, or has performed any great work, nature bursts a vein for it in the neck—which I did not at first credit till I had become an eye-witness of the fact. The Turcomans cut their horses, as it is a popular belief among them that they are then more on the alert, and undergo greater fatigue, than stallions. The Turcomans believe their horses to be exceedingly nice in hearing; and will often trust to their steeds for the alarm of an approaching enemy. I was particularly struck with the fine crests of the Turcoman horses; and I heard, though I could not authenticate its truth by observation, that they are often confined in a stable with no other aperture than a window in the roof, which teaches the animal to look up, and improves the carriage. The contrivance seems well fitted for such an end."

On the return of Colonel Valentine Baker to England he brought with him a Turcoman stallion, the first introduced into this country. It would be interesting to know what became of this animal,

which the gallant officer believed would be most useful in imparting endurance to the English race-horse of the future. In Russia, I believe, a large number of Turcoman horses have, in recent times, been added to the Government studs. During Lomakin's campaign of 1879 the Cossacks, on reaching the oasis of Akhal, exchanged their ponies for the huge horses captured from the Tekkes. "The transfer* was not attended with success. The Turcoman takes greater care of his horse than even of himself or his wife; the Cossack, on the contrary, lets his pony shift for itself, and when one dies he simply catches another. The result was, that, owing to a want of proper feeding, inattention, and neglect, the Turcoman horses acquired by the Cossacks rapidly sickened and died."

In the event of the conquest of the Tekkes by Russia, there is hardly a doubt that the greater part, if not the whole, of the thoroughbred horses of Akhal and Merv will be confiscated as a war-indemnity, and dispersed among the military studs of the Empire. In this manner, the finest breed of horses in Asia will fall into the hands of Russia, and in course of time the Russian breed will become the rival of the English and the Arab.

* *The Disastrous Campaign against the Turcomans.*

CHAPTER XI.

MAN-STEALING EXPEDITIONS.

Rise of slave-stealing in Turkmenia.—Early kidnappers.—Sarik and Salor raiders.—Forays from Merv.—The Tekkes and man-stealing.—Markets for slaves.—Number of slaves in Khiva in 1841; in Bokhara in 1845; in Bokhara during Burnes' visit.—The alaman and the tchapao.—Preparing for the foray.—Assembling the raiders.—Training the horses.—Marches the first four days of the foray.—Reconnoitring a caravan.—The attack.—Fate of the prisoners.—Treachery of the Persian villagers.—Characteristics of the Turcoman raids.—Petticoat chagrin.—Attacking villages.—Plundering pilgrims.—Extraordinary cowardice of the Persians.—Burnes' experience of an alaman.—Hajji Baba's account of his capture by Turcomans.—Stripping the captives.—Returning with the spoils to the camp.—Persian sayings about the Turcomans.—A terrible curse.—Colonel C. M. McGregor's brush with the Turcomans.—Brave after the event.—Narrative of a man three years captive among the Turcomans.—Carrying off slaves to the desert.—A romance of Turcoman life.—Escape from lifelong slavery.

"How can civilisation penetrate to Central Asia, as long as the Turcomans menace every traveller and every caravan with a thousand perils?"—VÁMBÉRY.

"Amedend u kendend u sukhtend
U kushtend u burdend u reftend."

"They came, destroyed, burned,
Murdered, robbed, returned."

PERSIAN DISTICH DESCRIBING THE TARTARS.

It is not a pleasant matter, when one's political sympathies are with the Turcomans, to have to expose their failings to a critical public, but this portion of the book is devoted to facts, not to feelings, and everything that can throw light upon the character of the Akhal and Merv Tekkes must be brought out in proper relief, without regard for sentiment.

For centuries the Turcomans have been accustomed to steal men and women from Persia, and, until very recently, a ready market could always be found for them in Central Asia. The present region of Turkmenia appears to have been favourably situated for a pursuit of this kind. In early times, when the Arabs ruled Central Asia from Merv, the slave-stream flowed from east to west, or from Samarcand and other Turkestan cities to Bagdad, the capital of the Arab khalifs. The Shahs of Persia in later times filled their harems with beauties from Transoxania. In the sixteenth century the direction changed. The people of Central Asia began to swarm outside their khanates, and Merv, alternately an outpost of the Persians and Uzbeks, served as a slave mart when the latter held the oasis, and as a feeble barrier to Uzbek raiders when the Persians occupied the city, and tried to prevent their ingress into Khorassan. As the Uzbeks, originally brave and warlike, grew sleek in their Transoxanian cities, and employed the surrounding nomads to do their fighting for them, the task of catching slaves fell mainly to the Turcomans. The Bokharan expedition of the Emir Murad against the Persian garrison at Merv in 1787, justly designated by Arminius Vámbéry as "a foray on a large scale," and the

subsequent occupation of the ravaged oasis in 1831 and 1855 by the Khans of Khiva, may be regarded as the final operations of the Uzbeks in the direction of Khorassan. After the retirement of the Khivans from Merv, the kidnapping of Persian slaves for the harems, the fields, and the workshops of Central Asia became a purely Turcoman pursuit, in which they were encouraged by the Uzbek princes.*

From the capture of Merv by Bokhara in 1787 to the conquest of Sarakhs by Persia in 1833, Merv and Sarakhs formed the principal points for the capture and disposal of Persian slaves. The Salor tribe, holding Sarakhs, and the Sariks, living in camps at Merv, were the principal Turcoman tribes engaged in man-stealing; although the Ersari raided to Herat, the Tchaudors kidnapped Cossacks and Russians, and the Yomoods stole men and women from the villages of Astrabad and the Caspian coast. The Tekkes, confined to Akhal, were too much engrossed with their conflicts with the border Kurds and neighbouring Turcomans to have much time for slave-catching.

Sarakhs was stormed by the Persians under Abbass Meerza in 1833, and the Salor tribe barely escaped complete annihilation. Had the event occurred a year earlier, that promising prince might have pushed

* Wolff writes:—"In 1831 it was the custom for the Emir of Bokhara to issue every year a decree ordering the Turcomans of the desert to march to Khorassan and Persia, and make *tchapao*, *i.e.* foray; which order the tribes obeyed, capturing whole caravans, burning down cities and villages, and selling the inhabitants as slaves in the cities of Turkestan." Burnes also mentions seeing, during his stay at Merv in 1832, the Khivans fitting out foraying parties to capture slaves in Khorassan.

on to Merv also and destroyed the Sarik Turcomans, but the Khivan forces had already secured the allegiance of the tribe, and a running sore was left on the north-east side of Khorassan which has never healed up since. The Khivans, as purchasers of slaves, had no incentive to crush the Sarik Turcomans, who kidnapped the Khorassanis for them, and hence, although conflicts between the Uzbeks and the nomads of the Moorgab were frequent, the latter escaped the sanguinary punishment they would undoubtedly have received had the invaders been of Persian origin.

In 1830 the Tekkes began to migrate from Akhal. After the conquest of Sarakhs the Persians allowed more than 10,000 families to occupy the ruins vacated by the Salors. At first they raided only against the Sarik and Salor tribes, old enemies of theirs, and against Khiva and Bokhara; but they soon found the injudiciousness of this policy, for by so doing they arrayed against themselves their most warlike neighbours, and captured slaves whom they could not sell to the Persians, since those pusillanimous allies and masters of theirs carried on no slave trade worthy of the name. They, therefore, made an effort to open up peaceful relations with the Uzbeks, and, on their capture of Merv from the Sariks in 1858, they became the principal medium for the supply of Persian slaves to the markets of Khiva and Bokhara. Three years later they captured at a stroke 20,000 Persian soldiers, and glutted the Uzbek sale-sheds to such a degree, that the price of an able-bodied man fell to a pound. To-day the Tekkes are the principal man-stealers in Central Asia. The Tchaudors and Yomoods have

been compelled by Russia to relinquish the pursuit, the Goklans have been crushed by Persia, and the closing of the markets in Turkestan has rendered it useless for the Ersari to indulge any longer in the alaman, or foray.

In 1841, when Abbott visited the Khanate of Khiva, out of a population of 2,468,500 people, 700,000, or about one in every three, were slaves. In the city of Khiva alone were 12,000 Heratis and 30,000 Persians, the rest of the slaves being scattered about the khanate as tillers of the soil. Writing of the same period, Wolff calculated that out of the 2½ million people composing the population of Bokhara, 200,000 were in a state of bondage. Burnes observed of a Bokharan village near the Oxus, in 1832, that, "though not boasting of more than 20 houses there were yet seven or eight Persian slaves; and these unfortunate men appear to be distributed in a like proportion throughout the country."

The Turcomans use the term *alaman* to signify a kidnapping expedition. Another word, *tchapao*, confused with it by many travellers, means, according to Vámbéry, a surprise. Ferrier thus describes the *alaman*:—

"When a chief is determined upon making a foray, he plants his lance, surmounted by his colours, into the ground in front of his tent, and a crier invites all good Mussulmen, in the name of his Prophet, to range themselves under his banner, and join in the raid upon the Persian infidels. His wishes, however, are no law to any of the tribe, for the Turcoman enjoys the most perfect liberty, and those only who have confidence in their chief ride

up and strike their lances into the ground near his, the signal that the volunteer has decided to follow his fortunes. When the chief thinks that he has assembled a sufficient number of men to insure the success of the expedition, he names that day month as the day of departure, this time being required for each man to get his horse into that high state of condition without which he could not support the extraordinary fatigue and hardships he has to undergo.

"During this month the forage for a horse for 24 hours consists of six pounds of hay or clover-hay, and about three pounds of barley, or one half the ordinary quantity of corn. This reduces the animal considerably in flesh, which is the object in view—the first step in his training; his pace improves under it, and he is thus prepared for the strengthening and somewhat singular food which he is subsequently to have.

"The horse is then put to his full speed for half an hour every day, and is not fed until some considerable time after he comes in; very little water is given him, and if he is eager to drink, it is a sign that he ought to fast a little longer; but this training never exceeds a month. The thirty days having elapsed, the Turcomans take the field, each of them with two horses; the one, the charger, which has been trained in the manner described, the other, a *yaboo*, or inferior animal used for burden, which the Turcoman mounts on leaving his aoul, and which carries him to the Persian territory; the other follows him without saddle or bridle, and never strays from the party, for both have been accustomed to

follow their master like dogs from the time they were foals. The first day's march seldom exceeds 12 miles; the second, 15; the third, 18; and the fourth, 21. When they arrive at this point the Turcomans change the forage of the charger, and substitute four pounds and a quarter of barley-flour, two pounds of maize-flour, and two pounds of raw sheeps'-tail fat chopped very fine, all well mixed and kneaded together: this is one day's ration, without either straw or hay. The horses are very fond of this food, which is given them in balls, and puts them in tip-top condition, and after having been fed in this manner for four days the animal is capable of supporting the longest forced marches. Then, and not till then, their masters mount them, and prepare for the work of pillage.

"Previously to this, however, they look out for some hiding-place fortified by nature, which will furnish them with a secure retreat under adverse eventualities. While they are quietly resting themselves and their horses here, three or four are detached from the band to ascertain, if possible, whether any caravans are likely to pass. Sometimes these scouts will join the *kafila* (pilgrim caravan) in the guise of inoffensive travellers, and as they go along take very good care to find out the nature and value of the merchandize, the number of armed men, &c., and then suddenly disappear and convey the information to their companions. Though the Turcomans do not run much risk in such *reconnaissances*, they prefer, for prudence sake, to obtain this information from Persians living in the frontier villages, with whom they are frequently in communication, and

pay accordingly. These vagabonds, who, without an idea of pity, thus deliver up their unfortunate countrymen to these bandits, explore the roads and give intelligence, which is generally but too accurate. During the time thus occupied in reconnoitring, the main body of the Turcomans that remain concealed are not inactive; the majority scour the immediate neighbourhood in small parties of five or six, and, as their numbers do not attract attention, they frequently manage to carry off some of the peasants working in the fields; this is the ordinary prelude to operations on a large scale. In the evening they rejoin their friends to hear the news from their scouts, and deliberate upon their plans for the morrow.

"When the attack is at length decided upon, half-a-dozen men are selected by the chief to remain with the provisions and *yaboos*; the rest, mounted on their best horses, gallop quickly to the appointed spot, whether village or caravan, on either of which they fall like a whirlwind, and, like it, devastate and finally sweep up and carry off everything, including men, women, and children, that comes in their way; in a few minutes all is over. Incendiarism is not unfrequently their last act; and, leaving the flames and smoke to tell the tale of desolation to the distant villages, they fly with their booty, and gain the spot where they left their horses, putting from 100 to 130 miles behind them without drawing bit; and in an incredibly short space of time reach their encampment. Their horses, accustomed to these long and rapid journeys, accomplish them without knocking up; but this is not the case with the unhappy persons

who have been kidnapped: these, if few in number, are generally taken up behind their captors, or, if more numerous, they tie them on the horses they have stolen, and drive them before them until the animals drop with fatigue. The unhappy prisoners they carried are then attached by a long cord to the saddle-bow of their brutal tormentors, who drag them along, sometimes walking, sometimes running, according to the pace at which their own horses are going at the time. Woe to them who slacken their pace! for directly any show symptoms of fatigue, the head of the Turcoman's lance pricks and forces them on to further exertion; and should nature give way entirely, and they fall, they are killed without remorse. Of one hundred Persians thus carried off and obliged to march with their captors, scarcely a third reach Turkestan, or, at any rate, the spot from whence the party set out on their villainous expedition. A Turcoman's sensibility is never awakened to suffering, no matter how terrible—the sentiment of pity is unknown to them. A Persian is in their eyes simply a mercantile and marketable commodity, and not worth taking care of after it has been injured—they are merciless by habit and by calculation. A prisoner who could make his escape would never forget the treatment he had received at their hands, and would certainly take his revenge by giving information at the first military post he came to. In killing his captive, therefore, a Turcoman looks upon the act as one of proper foresight and a necessary precaution. In their aouls they give their prisoners the smallest possible quantity of food—just enough, in short, to keep body and soul together, so that they may never

be strong enough to entertain a hope of effecting their escape.

"In consequence of the mutual understanding which exists between the Turcomans and the Kurdish chiefs employed by the Persian Government to guard the frontier, the former are rarely interfered with in their expeditions. It sometimes happens, however, that the inhabitants of the border villages, who are the most liable to be attacked, and have also their own spies, receive intelligence of their enemies' movements, and, assembling in arms, lie in wait for them as they pass through some defile or other difficult ground, and exterminate the whole band without pity. But these reprisals are unfortunately of rare occurrence, and will never be more numerous until they are loyally seconded by the regular troops.

"In spite of the impudent manner in which the Turcomans thus enter the Persian territory, sometimes to a distance of 200 or 300 miles, it should be remembered that they contrive to do this by gliding between the villages at night and unperceived. The stealthy and sudden nature of their attack is the reason of their success. This is, no doubt, a very useful military quality, but after having seen them fight it is impossible to have any high opinion of their courage. They will expose themselves to unseen dangers for the chance of taking their enemy unawares, but let them meet their enemy face to face, let their adversaries send a volley about their ears, they will not stand a minute. They never fall upon a caravan unless they are superior in numbers, and the travellers appear disinclined to fight; but immediately there is the

least appearance of resistance, they rarely attack in earnest: on such occasions they are right careful of their skins, hanging, though at a respectable distance, on their flanks, to cut off the stragglers or some portion of the baggage; but directly there is a chance of their losing any men they soon make off. The Turcomans are the best mounted robbers in the world, but will never make good soldiers; nevertheless, there are Turcoman chiefs who have some regard for their reputation, and are ashamed to return empty-handed to their aouls, and expose themselves to the jeers of the old men and the reproaches of their wives. The latter on such occasions present them with their petticoats as a mark of contempt, and, disgusted with their want of success, worry and endeavour to make them start again; but the Turcoman ladies, as in more civilised countries, do not always carry their point and succeed in making themselves obeyed. Under any circumstances, nothing will induce a Turcoman to attack more than three times. He then retires to his encampment, completely convinced that Providence declares against him. Should a family lose one of its members in the first or second attempt, they are not obliged to furnish another man; nevertheless, they preserve all their rights and participate in the booty. This is sold to the Uzbeks, who visit the encampments two or three times a year. These speculators pay, of course, with ready money or articles in barter. A boy about 10 years of age will fetch forty Toomans; a man of 30, twenty-five Toomans; and of 40, twenty Toomans."

If the foraging party be numerous they make for

a village, where, says Fraser, "they lie in wait near the gate in perfect silence until the morning dawns, and the unsuspecting inhabitants come forth from the gates, to labour, to drive their cattle afield, or for other purposes; when they start from their lurking place, seize all they can catch, murder those who resist, rapidly plunder the village, and, binding their booty upon such cattle as they may have secured, hastily retreat before the neighbourhood have caught the alarm." "When* the walls of a village keep them out, they content themselves with driving the cattle. A smaller party waits near the road for pilgrims, as on the one between Shahrood and Meshed, which is travelled by 50,000 or 60,000 pilgrims. Their plan is, to conceal themselves in a hollow near the course of the caravan, having scouts stationed unseen, but watchful of its movements, upon the heights around. A reserve is usually posted at a little distance from the track, to support the advance party in their retreat, and, upon the strength of the belief that they always do so, they sometimes push forward their whole force, and capture a stronger party than themselves; for the sight of one Turcoman induces a Persian to suppose that he has a thousand others at his back, and the feeling, if it does not frighten him into an incapacity to defend himself, certainly operates to dissuade him from attempting the rescue of his friends." "Very often† a Turcoman will not hesitate to attack five or even more Persians, and will succeed in his enterprise. I have been told by the Turcomans, that not

* Conolly. † Vámbéry.

unfrequently one of their number will make four or five Persians prisoners. 'Often,' said one of these nomads to me, 'the Persians, struck with a panic, throw away their arms, demand the cords, and bind each other mutually. We have no occasion to dismount, except for the purpose of fastening the last of them.'"

"It is generally * in the grey morning that the Turcomans wait for the pilgrims; when, half asleep, after a weary night's march, they have dispersed for prayers. Then, with a 'Ho, ho!' they dart upon them, make haste to cut down a few of the least valuable persons, and do not find it difficult to drive off the greater part of the rest." Burnes, in his journey from Merv to Meshed, has left on record the impressions of a false alarm of an alaman:—

"We commenced our journey along the valley of the Tedjend in terror, and ere long met with an adventure that increased the rapidity of our march. About midnight the braying of a donkey intimated to some palpitating hearts that we were in the neighbourhood of human beings, where none should exist. The shout of 'Alaman, Alaman!' spread like lightning, and the caravan in a moment assumed the appearance of a regiment in open column, closing up in double march to form a square. The foremost camels squatted instantly, and the others formed behind them. Matches were lit on every side, swords were drawn, pistols loaded, and the unhappy merchants capered in front of their goods, half mad with fear and fury. The unarmed portion of the

* Conolly.

caravan took post among the camels, which really formed a tolerable square, increased as they were to the number of 120. The anxiety was intense, it was general. The slaves were more terrified than the rest, for they knew well the fate of capture by the Turcomans. After about a quarter of an hour's detention, one of the party discovered that the alamans, of whom we were standing in such awe, were a party of 20 poor wandering Eimaks, who had been gathering die (boozghoom) on the hills. They were more terrified than we, for their number made their fate inevitable had we been Turcomans. Immediately the mistake was discovered, a shout of delight raised the camels, and the caravan moved on at double its usual speed, with seven or eight camels abreast; nor did it stop at the prescribed halting-ground, but pushed on some eight or ten miles farther when the day dawned."

In his *Adventures of Hajji Baba*, Morier, the Persian traveller, gives a singularly graphic account of a Turcoman attack on a caravan proceeding to Meshed.

"At length, what we so much apprehended actually came to pass. We heard some shots fired, and then our ears were struck by wild and barbarous shoutings. The whole of us stopped in dismay, and men and animals, as if by common instinct, like a flock of small birds when they see a hawk at a distance, huddled ourselves together into one compact. But when we in reality perceived a body of Turcomans coming down upon us, the scene instantly changed. Some ran away; others, and among them my master, losing all their energies, yielded to intense fear, and

began to exclaim, 'Oh, Allah! oh, Imâms! oh, Mahomet the prophet; we are gone! we are dying! we are dead!' The muleteers unloosed their loads from their beasts, and drove them away. A shower of arrows, which the enemy discharged as they came on, achieved their conquest, and we soon became their prey. The *chaoûsh* (official in charge of the caravan) who had outlived many a similar fray, fled in the very first encounter, and we neither saw nor heard any more of him. The invaders soon fell to work upon the baggage, which was now spread all over the plain. My master had rolled himself up between two bales of goods to wait the event, but was discovered by a Turcoman of great size, and of a most ferocious aspect, who, taking him at first for a part of the baggage, turned him over on his back, when (as we see a wood-louse do) he opened out at full length, and expressed all his fears by the most abject entreaties. He tried to soften the Turcoman by invoking Omar and cursing Ali. But nothing would do; the barbarian was inexorable; he only left him in possession of his turban, out of consideration to its colour, but in other respects he completely stripped him, leaving him nothing but his drawers and shirt, and clothing himself with my master's comfortable cloak and trowsers before his face. My clothes being scarcely worth the taking, I was permitted to enjoy them unmolested, and I retained possession of my case of razors, to my no small satisfaction.

"The Turcomans having completed their plunder, made a distribution of the prisoners. We were blindfolded and placed, each of us, behind a horse-

man, and after having travelled for a whole day in this manner, we rested at night in a lonely dell. The next day we were permitted to see, and found ourselves on roads known only to the Turcomans. Passing through wild and unfrequented tracts of mountainous country, we at length discovered a large plain, which was so extensive that it seemed the limits of the world, and was covered with the black tents and the numerous flocks and herds of our enemies."

It is a common Persian saying, that a Turcoman on horseback knows neither father nor mother, but will seize and sell whatever lies at his mercy.

Vámbéry is inclined to think that it is the "terrible historical prestige of the Tartars of the north that robs the boldest Persian of his courage." McGregor says that "if you want a Persian to progress quickly, you have only got to put the Khauf-y-Toorkmun (the fear of the Turcoman) behind him." Ferrier, during his caravan journeys, found that "when a Persian sets out on a journey he says, 'God is merciful,' and if he is taken prisoner by a Turcoman he exclaims, 'It was my fate.'" Complete impotence is displayed in the Persian saying which Burnes found to be common in Khorassan: "The Turcoman is a dog, and will only be kept quiet, like a dog, with a bit of bread; give it, then, is the doctrine of the traveller, and pass on unmolested." Before the Russians occupied Tchikishlar, and built a fort there, the name of Atrek, Vámbéry tells us, was "a word of terror and a curse for the unfortunate inhabitants of Mazendran and Taberistan. The Persian must be very incensed when he allows the

words 'Etrek buifti' ('May you be driven to Atrek') to escape his lips." The Turcomans, on their part, repeated with energy to Burnes:

> "The Kizil Bashis" (Persians) "have ten towers;
> In each tower is *only* a Georgian slave.
> What power have the Kizil Bashis?
> Let us attack them."

McGregor, riding along the Khorassan frontier in 1876, had a brush with the Turcomans, which brought out conspicuously the pusillanimity of the Persians of to-day:

"I was much amused, while we were being taken by the guide, meandering all over the country, by the conduct of the muleteer, Budrooee. Several times he came up to me and whispered, 'Sahib, where is he taking us to? Don't go with him; he is a Turcoman. They are all Turcomans here.' But I was convinced from the man's manner and appearance that he was only stupid, not treacherous; so I disregarded the warnings of Budrooee, and persisted in following him. This was too much for the Budrooee's nerves, and at last he came up and said, 'Sahib, I am not going on. I have got a wife and children at Sheeraz, and I am not going to be carried off or killed by the Turcomans. You may go if you like, but I won't.' And with this he left me, and dropped to the rear. When day broke we found ourselves only about six miles off the fort, with the hills still six more ahead of us, and so I pushed on as fast as possible, Budrooee having rejoined me as soon as it became light. The road lay over an extensive plain, which rose very gradually to the fort of the hills (Himmutabad), and was covered with thick

scrub. The soil of this tract was excellent, and as the river runs close by to the west, there is no reason why the whole of it should not be diverted from its present purpose, of merely affording grazing, to cultivation.

"When we had got about two miles off the hills, my bird of ill-omen, Budrooee, suddenly gave a sort of shriek, and called out, 'Sowar! Turcoman!' and, without waiting, made straight for a hill half a mile on the right. Budkhooee was not quite so bad, and waited till I had looked with my glasses, which I at once did, and there sure enough, about three miles off, were about 20 sowars dressed in dark clothes, with black hats. 'At last,' I thought, 'we are in for it.' I looked again, only, however, to be confirmed in my belief. They were clearly sowars, and they were coming towards us. I gave a rapid glance round the country to look for a place of refuge, but all around was a plain; only in one direction was a low hill, the one Budrooee had instinctively made tracks for, and so turning my horse's head, I said to my brave army—which consisted of my boy, a Persian servant named Mahamad, and Budkhooee, 'Make for the hill.' Directly I had uttered the words, Budkhooee, who was mounted on a pony, gave him a thwack, and away he went towards the hill as if a thousand Turcomans were after him, taking one of my pistols. Feeling that I had now had proof enough that the Persians would not stand by me, I determined that my boy and self would fish for ourselves; and so, taking from him the rifle, I told him to go on and get as high up the hill as he could, while I brought up the rear. I looked several times, and each time

felt sure I had made no mistake; there was no doubt about their being sowars, or about their coming towards us. I thus felt sure we were in for a bout with these Turcomans, and of course, as it does on these occasions, everything seemed to flash before me—all my life, down to that moment; then came a picture of a fight on the hill-side, and the thought whether in a few minutes more I should be dead or a prisoner. At last we got within a quarter of a mile of the hill, and Budrooee and Mahamad, whom we caught up, both quite green with fright, and dead beat with their unwonted hurry, seemed ready to drop. I could get them to go on no farther, and as it was impossible to think of remaining and receiving the attack of 20 horsemen on the level, and as, despite their unfaithfulness, I could not quite bring myself to abandon them and leave them to shift for themselves, I got off my horse and told them to mount. Thus we ran on, and I clambered up the hillock, taking my Snider carbine from my boy; but I was too blown to make any use of it. The Turcomans were now about a mile off, coming towards us at a canter, so I utilized the few seconds which remained before they came within range by lying down and recovering my breath; meanwhile Pascal had jumped off my horse and arrived at the top of the hill. Budkhooee and Mahamad were running towards us, ever and anon casting a glance to the rear. Presently the horsemen came within 600 yards, and I could see them quite plainly; only four had fire-arms, or at least guns, three had spears, and the rest swords, and, perhaps, pistols. My object was not to draw blood, but trust to their sheering off, for this was my

only hope. So I fired four shots from the Snider as fast as I could, taking care not to hit anyone. At the first they slackened their pace, at the second stopped, and then seemed to consult. Fighting is not what a Turcoman comes for; and, when the next two shots were fired, they doubtless thought that there were four men, at least, armed with guns on a hillock not easy to get at. They then went back a few yards and got into a ravine, which hid all but the spears from us. This was a moment of great anxiety, and I eagerly scanned the look of the country to see if I could trace where the ravine led to. I felt much relieved to find it ran straight on to join the river below Himmutabad away from us. After a few seconds, which seemed to me hours, I saw two black specks appear over the edge of the ravine, and I knew, from my glasses, that these were heads, and I concluded heads would not start up in this fashion without reason. Then came two shots, to which I did not reply. More seconds, and then an evident commotion in the ravine, and the Turcomans all came out and rode round our hillock to the north-east; but they had not gone far when I heard several shots away to the north, and looking, saw a crowd of men on foot coming over an undulation in the ground. No sooner did the Turcomans see them than they turned their horses and rode straight away to the south-east at a gallop, and we were safe. I shouted a yell of triumph, for though I did not know who our preservers were, I preferred being allowed to continue my way towards Meshed, instead of making a detour by Merv. I then looked round at my companions. There was little change

in Pascal's appearance; his face retained much of the cheerful, chubby expression it always had; but Mahamad was a sight—I don't know what colours you would have to mix to produce the particular green which overspread his not beauteous countenance. He was past speaking; fear had made his remaining wits fly. Budrooee was better; with him it was not so much fear, as what we might soon have all been suffering from—want of breath. He had taken in the fact of our deliverance, and was trying to blubber out sounds of joy, but no sound would come; his throat was parched beyond all speaking, and he only gulped convulsively.

"When I had seen my late friends well off, I lost no time in getting down the hillock, and, mounting my horse, I made for our deliverers. All were now in the best of spirits. Safety, combined with a little water, loosened the tongue of Budrooee, and in a loud voice, and with that insane sort of laugh one gives when one is *very glad*, he informed us, 'He had made up his mind to die by me: he would never have been carried off alive. The Turcomans,' he went on to say, 'are not really brave, and there is no doubt that if you show a bold front, as we did, Sahib, the dogs generally sheer off. Ah!' he cried, firing off one of my pistols which I had lent him, 'if these unsainted sons of burnt fathers had come a little closer!'

"Soon we came up to the party whose opportune arrival had so fortunately saved us. They belonged to a camp of Taemoorees close by, and there were about 40 of them, while others came struggling up from the rear. At their head was Budkhooee.

Under ordinary circumstances I should have liked to have kicked him; but though he had bolted with the sole object of saving his own skin, his doing so had also saved ours, and I was in no humour for severity. Going on over the hill we came on to the camp of these people, which had been thrown into a great state of commotion by Budkhooee's arrival; the flocks had been driven off, and the women were streaming with their bairns towards the hills on the west."

Fraser had a man brought him, "who had just returned from three years' captivity among the Turcomans. He said he was a native of Meyomeid, a village in the desert; that, in crossing towards Shahrood to recover some wages, in company with another man, they observed a flock of wild asses in full flight, and, while gazing at the uncommon spectacle, five horsemen made their appearance in chase, who, when they observed the two travellers, quitted the pursuit, and rode up to them. They soon recognised them for Turcomans, and attempted to escape; but it was too late. The relater attempted to throw himself into a dry well, or hole, to avoid them; but one of them galloping up, knocked him down by a blow on the head with the back of his sword, and binding his elbows behind his back, with a rope tied about his neck to prevent any attempt at escape, dragged him at his horse's rein for eight days together, giving him but very little to eat. At night they tied his feet also, and throwing a *numud* over him, they laid down across it, so that he could not move, and went to sleep. When they reached the camp, he was put to such labour as herding

cattle, assisting agricultural labours, &c. They fed him but poorly, but did not otherwise use him ill, and he allowed that the Turcomans in general treat their slaves well.

Another man's narrative was tinged with romance. "He was taken prisoner along with the greater part of a caravan, which was proceeding from Shahrood to Meshed, but which was surprised and plundered a little way beyond Meyomeid, at a fountain called the Chushmah-e-Zeyder. They carried him, he says, twelve days' journey, to their encampment in the desert, where he was put to labour; but forming an attachment with his master's daughter (who met his advances more than half way), his situation became greatly ameliorated, and he was left much at liberty. In these circumstances he remained for three months, after which, believing that he might be able to effect his escape, one day, when the father, with the greater part of the males, had gone on a foray, and the mother to pay a visit, he took the opportunity, and invited the young lady to walk in the neighbouring country. She, occupied no doubt with her own reflections and hopes, suffered him to inveigle her to a distance of fifteen or sixteen miles from the encampment; and, upon her then expressing a desire to return, he looked her full in the face, and replied, '*You* may go back, indeed, but I shall return no more; may God protect you!' 'What!' cried the lady in a passionate fit of rage, 'do you mean thus to leave me after all your assurances of love, and after carrying me so far from my home?' The lover, on this explosion, did his best to pacify his mistress, and succeeded in calming her most

violent transports; but, upon his again wishing her all happiness, and attempting to leave her, she declared her determination to accompany him in his flight, and another altercation began, which he, wisely reflecting that she would prove a serious incumbrance on the way, at last ended by threatening to put her to death if she did not immediately desist and quit him. Frightened at his threats, she at last allowed him to depart, and he made the best of his way in the direction where he had been informed Shahrood lay. The lady, however, alarmed the camp on her return, and fifty horsemen mounted and pursued his footsteps, which were traced to a rocky hill, the haunt of foxes and jackalls. In one of the holes of these animals he hid himself, and when his pursuers came up they approached his retreat so near, that he heard them observe one to another, 'He certainly is not far off, for his traces are plain to this hill.' But he called on the names of God and of Allah, and the robbers were baffled.

"When the Turcomans had left the place, he continued his way, fortunately without further interruption, for twelve days; during this time, he assured us, his only sustenance was a small piece of bread which he had put in his pocket at the time of his flight, and snow, of which there was a sufficiency on the ground; and he was also signally lucky in making his way almost straight to Shahrood."

CHAPTER XII.

THE TURCOMAN SCOURGE.

Devastation in Khorassan.—Sights in Deregez.—Ruined settlements.—A life of constant alarm.—Terrible sufferings of the Khorassanis.—The raid on Faizabad.—"I wish to God either you or the Russians would come and free us from these devils."—Depopulated banks of the Heri Rood.—Raids to Herat.—What Grodekoff saw in 1878.—The district of the 350 ruined villages.—Conduct of the Persian Governors.—Colonel Baker stops a meditated raid against the Tekkes.—A man murdered for his carpet.—Crucifying Turcomans.—Making targets of them.—Impaling them alive.—Noor Verdi's daughter ravished.—Persian treachery.—How the raids might be checked.—Abominable government of Persia.—Baker's plan for safeguarding the border.—McGregor's ditto.—The fate of the successful man in Persia.—Gouging out the eyes of Turcomans in Khiva.—Shooting Turcomans by the order of Russian courts-martial.—Running down pirates in the Caspian.—The bloodthirsty campaign of Kaufmann.—Massacre of Turcoman children and the outraging of women by Cossacks.—The spirited Circassian style.—The bombardment of 5,000 women and children at Dengeel Tepé.—How England may be conquered in India.—Conolly concludes a chapter of horrors.

"The Persians have been so long afraid of these Turcomans, that they will hardly make an effort to defend themselves. "Oonha bisseaur jungee hustund, wo ma' ser ne', dareem," is their apology: "They are very warlike, and we've no head." In the last three words the Persian has shown the cause of all the evils that afflict his countrymen,—they have no head."—CONOLLY.

VÁMBÉRY affirms that, "the terrible extent to which the most exposed provinces of Persia suffer from the alaman is explained by the courage and resolution of the Turcomans. No war, no devastation caused by the elements, can be compared to the misery which their depredations occasion. Not only is all trade and commerce on the highways crippled, but even the husbandman must provide himself with a tower, in which he can take refuge when suddenly attacked by them during his labours in the fields. The smallest village is surrounded by a wall. Even these measures do not suffice, for the robbers often come in large bands and lay siege to such fortified places, and not seldom carry the whole population, men, women, and children, into captivity, with all their moveable property. I have seen in Eastern Khorassan villages, whose inhabitants, although in the immediate vicinity of large forests, pass the winter without fires, because none dare venture out to cut wood beyond the walls. Others suffer hunger, as their water-mills are outside the village. Travelling is, of course, regarded as a most desperate venture, which no one undertakes save in cases of the most urgent necessity, or under the protection of an armed force."

In another place, he asserts that "the Turcomans are notorious among all the races of Central Asia as the most restless adventurers, and rightly; for not only there, but throughout the whole globe, hardly can a second nation be found of such a rapacious nature, of such restless spirit and untameable licentiousness, as these children of the desert. To rob, to plunder, to make slaves is, in the eye of the Turcoman, an honourable business, by

which he has lived for centuries. He considers those who think otherwise as stupid or mad, and yields in such a manner to this passion that he often commences plundering his own tribe, indeed, often his own family, in case he is baulked in foreign forays. As a very weak apology, it may be argued that they inhabit the wildest and most savage countries, where even the keeping of cattle gives only a scanty revenue; still the fruits of their detestable trade hardly ever alleviate their pressing poverty, for they are just as dirty niggards, as avaricious, and starve often in the possession of riches as much as the poorest being."

Colonel McGregor, riding from Meshed to Deregez, passed "in the valley of Zingalanee a noble mountain stream, thirty feet broad and three deep, rushing past a beautiful valley with acres and acres of good soil, but without a living soul in it. There is water enough and land enough along this stream, from the time it leaves the defiles till it reaches the plains and is lost in the desert, to support in comfort not under 50,000 souls, and yet not one ever ventures here except as we were doing, to hurry through with eyes and ears and senses all open for the slightest trace of the fell Turcoman. Here and there were old ruined towers, and in one place I saw signs of an abandoned village, each marking eras in the annals of this country. First, before the Turcomans had become a scourge to the land, a smiling valley with fields and flocks and signs of life everywhere; then the same valley with fewer fields, more ruined houses, and more towers of refuge, and now even the latter had fallen, and so the swift stream carried its clear limpid water to be lost in the desert, or wasted

in carrying life to Turcoman dogs. It is really sad to see a magnificent country deserted like this; it has the finest soil and most water of any district I have seen in Persia, yet no attempt is made to colonize it. The excuse given—Khowf-y-Toorkmun (fear of the Turcomans)—is no excuse at all, for the Persian Government should be quite able to arrange that no Turcomans could live within raiding distance without giving up their habits of kidnapping."

Fraser met with abundant evidences that the Turcomans, "not content with the plunder of a caravan, attack and destroy whole villages, dragging away the inhabitants with their goods and cattle. None can say where the attack may light; and it is, therefore, necessary that the whole country should be for ever on their guard; the villages are walled or have fortresses attached to them, into which the inhabitants retreat in case of alarm; but even this is insufficient; so rapid are the movements of their enemies, that the inhabitants are often surprised in their fields or gardens at work. Everyone, therefore, goes armed to his labour, the sword is girded on and the matchlock lays beside the peasant while he guides the plough. They build among their cultivation, at small intervals, round towers, with one low aperture at bottom, into which the labourers may easily retreat on the least alarm; and barricaded below, and armed with their matchlocks, can bid defiance to their enemies; who, however superior in numbers, do not dare to remain any long time together in one place, or even to dismount, lest they should be surprised in their turn. Thus, in fear and doubt does the husbandman pursue his occupation, nor can any

precaution render him secure. Instances continually occur of individuals and even parties being carried off, and occasionally, when the banditti are numerous, they succeed in surprising and carrying off the inhabitants of a village. Not many miles from Lasgird we observed the ruins of a village, Abdoolabad, which some years ago had suffered this fate. The few survivors retreated into the hills, where they formed a new settlement, and fort of the same name. Nor is this a solitary instance, as various clusters of ruins in the plain fatally testify."

McGregor again, nearly 50 years later, found the state of Khorassan no better, if not, indeed, actually worse. During his travels he lighted upon "Gowdoosee, where the people were all Taemoorees, very fine, manly-looking fellows, with a fine healthy hatred of the Turcomans, and very pronounced contempt of the Kurjars. Poor devils! they had reason at least for the first feeling; there was not a man who had not suffered some loss, and very few of the elder ones who had not been prisoners. One man a month before had lost his wife, two daughters, and a son by these dogs of Turcomans, and he was in the depths of despair. He knew he could never ransom them; he had nothing, and the price demanded was 3,000 krans. He said if he could only be sure they would take him to the same place, he would go and get taken himself. They all said that if the Kurjars were not such contemptible characters, they would go and take them and release their people; they would one and all go and fight the Turcomans. But they could expect nothing from the Kurjars, and they eagerly asked when the Russians were coming,

adding, 'May God send them speedily!' This showed how the fame of the noble deed of the Russians in releasing all the slaves in Khiva has spread, and to what extent they have most deservedly gained prestige by it." No wonder that Grodekoff, who participated in the Khivan campaign, received an ovation at almost every place he stopped at in 1878, in his ride from Maimene to Meshed!

In another place, Colonel McGregor tells us he passed "a ruined village called Faizabad, which, four years ago, the Turcomans had surprised when most of the men were out, and had carried off every soul, about 100, out of it. This information was told me by a man who had lost his wife, three sons, and a daughter in this way. Poor devil! I pitied him, and could well appreciate the motive which induced him to say, 'Oh, Sahib, I wish to God either you or the Russians would come and free us from these devils.'"

Captain Marsh, riding from Meshed to Herat in 1872, writes that "the whole part of the country from Kareez right up to the banks of the Heri Rood is depopulated. It belongs to, or rather is occupied by, no one, being left as a high road for the Turcoman depredators. Such is the culpable inertness of both Persian and Afghan Governments. A small force posted at Kaffir Killa, an old ruined fort in the centre of the alaman track, well disciplined and armed, would soon put a stop to the vile man-hunters —in this part, at least."

When Vámbéry visited Herat in 1863, he found that the alamans extended their depredations to within a few leagues of Herat. "Scarcely does any

week elapse without villages being surprised and plundered, and the inhabitants led away into captivity."

Grodekoff, on leaving Tcheetchaktoo, on his second day's ride from Maimene to Herat in 1878, entered a country where "at every step may be seen traces of Turcoman forays—ruined villages, fields with fertile soil thrown out of cultivation, irrigation canals full of water but used by no one, and the banks of the River Kaisar clogged with reeds, and affording lairs for savage animals. On every side may be seen towers, into which the people retire the moment a Turcoman is seen. No matter how close a field may be to a village, even if the distance be only 20 steps, it is defended by a tower. The roads to the fields afar off are dotted all the way with towers, built 50 or 100 yards from each other, and no villager dare go outside his house unless fully equipped with defensive weapons." Further on, he found that "in the province of Herat special prayers are offered up, imploring the intervention of the Almighty against the alaman. As evidence of the truthfulness of what they told me, the people pointed to the burying-grounds, and begged me to notice how few were the graves unsurmounted by a tufted stick, the sign of death by the sword. They pointed to their villages, half the houses of which lay in ruins, and to the immense tracts of fertile country round about them, thrown out of cultivation because no one could till the soil without fear of being suddenly seized and hurried off into slavery. When the people learnt that I myself had taken part in the Khivan campaign" (which resulted in the liberation of the

slaves in Khiva), "their demonstrations of feeling towards me knew no bounds."

In his ride from Herat to the Persian frontier he passed through "a district, once containing 350 populous settlements. To-day the whole of these lie in ruins, owing to the Turcoman raids. Among the natives the district is commonly spoken of as 'The District of the 350 Ruined Villages.' Along the whole of the road from Koosan to Kareez, notwithstanding the fact of the country being entirely a waste, I saw at every step evidences of the frightful results of the Tekke alamans. These evidences were chiefly in the shape of graves, in which are interred the victims of the nomads' raids. The graves lie along the road, and as far on either side of it as the eye can reach. I did not count the graves, but I was told that more than a thousand people lie buried about the place."

The "Russian Burnaby" does not exaggerate the matter. Colonel C. M. McGregor, traversing the district between Meshed and Herat in 1876, found "a reality about the Turcoman raids which is quite startling. I had read a great deal about them, but till I came here was not prepared to accept all I heard. Now, however, I find those accounts have in no wise been exaggerated. Wherever one goes it is the same: stories of fathers, husbands, wives, or daughters carried off by these ruthless scoundrels, and sold into slavery, in most cases quite hopelessly. It is not too much to say that every man you meet has suffered some ill at their hands, and on every march you see in the abandoned houses and ruined kareezes (canals) signs of their fatal visits."

And yet, according to Colonel Valentine Baker, "the Persian or Kurd Governors along the North Persian frontier are not one whit behind the Turcomans in cruelty or atrocity. They also will occasionally make raids, killing and destroying, or capturing and holding Turcomans of note, when ransom can possibly be compelled. The barbarities inflicted on both sides (for one is just as bad as the other) are beyond belief. And yet Turcomans will be daily seen at Astrabad, or any of the frontier towns, who come in for purposes of trade, generally to sell horses; and they are allowed to do this with perfect impunity, although they may be notorious as leaders of forays."

Baker went on a hunting expedition with Persians across the Turcoman border, and this characteristic incident took place on his way back to the frontier: —"The Tekke settlement of Annaoo lay peacefully just below, at the foot of the hills. I noticed a mysterious consultation going on between the chief's brother and some of his principal followers; among whom was one splendid Kurd, who had attracted my attention on our expedition to Abiverd. He was a light and wiry, yet powerful man, and the *beau ideal* of an irregular horseman. He rode a beautiful thoroughbred brown Turcoman of about 15.3 in height; and I had heard that he was renowned for the number of Turcomans he had slain and the forays he had led. This man was in earnest conversation with the leader of our party. After a time the chief of Nowhanden came to me. 'My men are anxious that you should see a tchapao,' he said, 'and have proposed that, taking 60 of the best mounted men,

leaving the rest here as a support, we should swoop down on Annaoo. They have no idea we are here, and we shall take them by surprise. It is an excellent opportunity.'

"This excellent opportunity meant a dash at the devoted village, the murder of all the men, and the capture of all the women, children, and flocks.

"I explained to our leader that this must not be; that we, as English officers, had no quarrel with the Turcomans; and that, much as we were interested in their manners and customs, I could not permit such an act, nor become a participator in it.

"My decision was very badly received, and, after a fresh consultation, another attempt was made to persuade me. Firm as a rock, I said that if anything of the sort were attempted, I should send a letter to Alayar Khan, who would be very angry. The project was reluctantly abandoned; and below us, looking as peaceful as if war and rapine were unknown, lay the unsuspecting village—the men and boys lazily tending their herds, the women weaving carpets in the tents, and the children basking in the sun, never dreaming that their savage enemies were plotting murder and destruction just above them, and that a few short minutes would have sealed their fate. Little thought they that the Frenghi was whispering words of mercy on their behalf, and saving them from captivity and death."

Baker wanted a Turcoman carpet, and one was found him, "captured a few days before by a Kurd in the village. The history of this carpet will give some idea of the kind of life led on the border.

About a week before, a Turcoman had come into the Monah village to trade, and, amongst other things, brought this carpet; but, wanting too much for it, he could not effect its sale. Some of the Kurds, discovering where he came from, assembled a few men, made a dash at the village at early dawn, killed the man, and got his carpet.

"This sort of thing is of daily occurrence. Of course all the Kurd villages are fortified, while the Turcomans live in tents, and are, therefore, much more assailable; yet they manage to hold their own pretty equally. The Budjnurd governor, we heard, had appropriated to his own use three-fourths of the cattle and spoil taken in the last foray. It was naturally to be expected that the Turcomans would soon make a return raid on a large scale. Then the Kurd villagers would suffer, but the governor would not be one penny the poorer. With an indolent, effete government like that of Persia, it may easily be conceived how difficult it is to stop such a system, as the frontier governors derive a large income from it. Moreover, the chief officials at Teheran often extort presents of great value from them; so that they also benefit, and an organised system of extortion prevails from the highest to the lowest. It is a shameful state of things."

Captain Marsh, in his *Ride through Islam* in 1872, "saw at Meshed a dreadful sight. On a dead wall, at the end of a lane, were three men crucified; they had large wooden tent-pegs driven through the hands and feet, and one through the back, with their faces to the wall. It made me shudder; one glance

being sufficient. These unfortunates were three Turcomans the Persian governor had lately caught red-handed in a raid on some village in the neighbourhood. These wretches are the terror of the country, and richly deserved death, but not such a dreadful one; for, to prolong the torture, the peg through the back was left in. Had it been extracted they would have died at once. Some caught before had been flayed alive, and left to die by inches. They told me that 80 chiefs of the Turcomans had been invited to a conference at Meshed, and had been treacherously seized. So much for the civilisation of Persia! This was by the order of Prince Murad Meerza, the governor, one of the most accomplished men of his time."

General Petroosevitch recounts that "in 1861, after the Persian defeat near Merv, the Turcomans became very bold, and bands penetrated to Meshed, where some were killed in an ambush and others taken prisoners. The latter, to the number of one hundred, were ordered by the Shah to be sent to Teheran. On their arrival in chains from Meshed they were placed outside the walls, and *sarbazes* (regular infantry) were ordered to fire at 300 yards distance at them. What with their wretched marksmanship and their short-range muskets, the soldiers were unable to effect anything against the living targets, and the firing went on fruitlessly for hours; when, at last, the shades of evening closing in, the troops were ordered to march up to the Turcomans and put them out of their misery.

"In 1875 the brother of the present Shah was appointed ruler of Khorassan. To celebrate his arrival

at Meshed twenty Turcomans were led from prison, and in the presence of the new ruler, his suite, and the public, were impaled one by one on spikes. The anguish the wretched men must have suffered as they watched, while waiting their turn, their comrades writhing on the pointed stakes, may be guessed from the offer which the last Turcoman made of 2,000 Toomans (£1,000) to the Persians to set him free. His offer was refused. The executioners seized him to drag him to the stake, but he did not reach it alive. The dread of torture so acted upon his mind, that he dropped down dead with fright at the very feet of the brother of the Shah."*

Noor Verdi Khan, the present leader of the Tekkes of Merv, was formerly leader of the Tekkes of Akhal. He had a daughter whose loveliness was the theme of every Turcoman poet. The Shuja-ud-Dowleh, or Persian governor of Kuchan, Captain Butler tells us,† employed a man to kidnap the girl for his harem. On the robber's way home with his prize, a son of the Shuja met him, tore the girl from his arms and ravished her. Is it wonderful that the Tekkes, enraged at the outrage, retaliated with raids into the region under the administration of the Persian governor? Some time afterwards, Noor Verdi Khan made a proposal to the Persian governor of Budjnurd to ransom a large number of Turcoman prisoners, seized during a series of Persian forays into Akhal. The offer was accepted, and Noor Verdi sent a large caravan with horses, sheep, carpets, &c.,

* *The Turcomans between the Old Bed of the Oxus and the North Persian Frontier.*

† *Central Asian Portraits*, by Boulger.

to Budjnurd. While on its way thither, the Persian governor of Kuchan, the same Shuja-ud-Dowleh, heard of the arrangement, and sallying out with his troops, captured the convoy and carried it off to his capital. Noor Verdi, enraged, collected 6,000 Akhal Tekkes and advanced against Kuchan, but Shuja, hearing of this by a spy, outflanked the Turcomans, and slipping past them, carried off their women and children from their place of refuge. Yet this Shuja-ud-Dowleh seemed, to Colonel McGregor, "one of the most intelligent and best governors" he had seen in Persia, and who, he afterwards learnt, "was certainly much beloved by his people."

Of the relations between the Persians and the Turcomans, Vámbéry observes that "the Turcomans first of all inquire into the character and administration of a newly appointed governor, and if they find in him signs of cowardice or neglect of duty (which is often the case), they make repeated incursions with terrible speed on the defenceless province committed to his care. On the other hand, they hardly dare to show themselves in those places where a vigorous and active officer is at the head of affairs. At the time of my journey through Khorassan the roads were so safe that travellers could go alone through districts which were formerly so fraught with danger, that the largest and best appointed caravans could pass there only when accompanied by a body of troops and a battery of cannon. At that time the governor, Sultan Murad Meerza, kept the nomads in check. Every movement of theirs was reported to him by his spies, and, as soon as they showed themselves, they were attacked in their own haunts,

and received severe punishment. In Astrabad, on the contrary, where a fool was entrusted with the administration, the neighbourhood was so unsafe that the Yomoods carried off Persians captive from the very gates of the town."

Ferrier, who served for many years in the Persian army, retiring with the honorary rank of Adjutant-General, and who was a Frenchman at a time when the French certainly did not love the English, may be cited as a tolerably impartial authority as regards the state of affairs on the North Khorassan border. "If the Persian Government were itself more moral and enlightened—if the Shah and his Ministers ever devoted themselves to the organisation of a good Government, and keeping their army in an efficient state, the disorders and villainous practices of the Turcomans would soon be put down. To do this it would only be necessary to occupy three passes in a mountainous district through which they march from their steppes. This done, four or five columns of cavalry, supported by a few light howitzers and field-pieces, should be formed in *échelon* on the frontier bordering their territory. These guns ought to be served by men who know the country thoroughly, so that they could hasten to any point at which they might be required, even into the very aouls of the Turcomans. A tax might then be levied upon them which would pay the troops thus employed. By this means the State would insure the peace and security of one of Persia's finest provinces without any expense, and bring a misguided people to understand those feelings of humanity and civilisation which, though only partially understood in Persia as compared with

Europe, are far more so than amongst the Turcomans. Unhappily there is little hope that such a plan would be adopted by the Government of the Shah; provided gold flows into his treasury, little does he care whether his people are pillaged or not, or that eight or ten of his principal nobles eat up the revenues of the country. The Turcomans have pillaged, and will go on pillaging. No one prevents them. The worst of it is, the small Persian chieftains charged with the defence of the frontier districts almost always have an understanding with these rascals, who pay them a portion of their ill-gotten plunder on condition of their leaving the passes open for them, or being at the moment of the foray conveniently out of the way.

"The defiles, which are supposed to be guarded by the Kurds, ought to be held by the Persian regular troops, and they are so well fortified by nature that a small force would suffice for that purpose. The Turcomans would then not even attempt the passage. The impunity with which they commit their crimes is an encouragement to these bandits; when they hear of any preparations being made to attack them, their expeditions cease for a time, and they promise amendment and remain quiet; but this is only to lull the vigilance of the Persians, and when they fancy they are not thinking about them the Turcomans recommence their exploits. The conduct of the Government is in this respect most deplorable; for two or three years they leave them to plunder and pillage to their hearts' content, and, when the clamorous complaints of the people at length reach Teheran, they despatch to the

spot a few thousand infantry; but while this is going on and the soldiers are demolishing the aouls" (of the Goklans or the Yomoods), "the tribe retire *en masse* into the territory of the Tekkes, where, in the heart of their steppes, it is impossible for the troops to follow them. Having, therefore, but half accomplished their duty, they are obliged to retire, dragging with them as hostages the women and children of the few families they have succeeded in capturing. As a matter of course, the tribe which fled at their approach now returns, and plunders the caravans with greater ardour than ever. In these encounters they soon make up their own losses, for they rarely consist of more than a few tents, felts, and kitchen utensils. As to money, a Turcoman never has any with him; he buries it in some secure spot known only to himself, and this is his resource should fortune turn the wheel against him. Giving up part of the spoil to the border chief he knows to be an infallible means of ingratiating himself, and through this means recovers his wife and children, if indeed he feels interested about them. Thus it will be seen that in the most adverse cases the Turcomans' loss is far less than that of the Persians."

Few will deny the strategical ability of Colonel Baker, so splendidly displayed during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. Ferrier's opinion that the Turcomans might be easily held in check, he supports by the assertion that "ten thousand men, properly commanded, could hold the Persian line of frontier from the Caspian by Kizil Arvat to Sarakhs, and a few block-houses, properly placed, would prevent a single Turcoman from ever entering beyond

the mountains. Yet many thousand square miles of Persian territory are either devastated or unoccupied, through the condition of terror induced by these raids, whilst at Teheran there are troops enough, in good order and armed with breechloaders, to easily hold all of this now useless country. And, rather than exert herself to keep the Turcomans in order, Persia is apparently willing, without a remonstrance, to see this, the finest part of her territory, occupied by Russia; and England stands by, and, from want of geographical knowledge, is unaware that the spoliation is being accomplished, and imagines that Russia is only occupying forts in the desert, instead of a fertile and most important part of the Persian frontier."

A third clever military writer, Colonel McGregor, may be cited to show what could be done between Meshed and Herat—more to the east of the region discussed by Ferrier and Baker. He says:—"The only cause of the Turcoman forays is the utter inertness of the Persian Government. They do almost nothing, and what they do is quite wasted. Between Herat and Meshed there are not less than 1,000 sowars, who are perpetually kept on the alert, and whose whole lives are wasted in, for the most part, fruitless chases after these dogs, because there is no head, no plan of action, no combination. These sowars, though sufficiently efficient for the purpose, have little chance of coping with the evil, for each chief of ten, twenty, fifty, or a hundred, does what he likes—mounts if he likes, or remains at home; flies off on an unfounded rumour 50 miles; or puffs on at his *calleeoon* if not inclined to attend to the most unmis-

takable proofs of their presence. It is true that, years ago, an attempt was made to attack Merv, but it ended, as it deserved, only in disastrous failure, which makes every governor now chary of burning his fingers. Yet the cause of this failure was not because the Tekkes were too brave, or the Persians not powerful enough, but simply because the latter started off on this expedition without any plan and without any acknowledged leader. Consequently, on a simple alarm, the whole force dissolved almost without fighting, leaving all their guns, baggage, and prisoners in the hands of the Turcomans. I remember I used to think the state of our Tank border in the Derajat as very extraordinary, but this leaves it far behind in the scale of unfitness. Yet there seems to me but little difficulty in putting an end to this state of affairs, and what there is, is rather due to the Persians than the Turcomans. If an efficient force could be got together, under a leader of average determination, the Tekkes must submit, and if they did, the conquering of the Goklans and Akhals would be easy. If the Russians are really as anxious as they assert they are to keep what they have got, and not look for more, all that need be asked from them is that they should forbid (as they are quite able to), absolutely, the purchase of all slaves in the khanates of Khiva, Bokhara, and Khokand, which are tributary to them; and let us do the same with all the states of Turkestan under our influence, such as South Turkestan, Badakshan, and Yarkund. This, the first step, would cut them off from any market; and if it was followed by expeditions, properly organised, from Astrabad against the Gok-

lans, from Budjnurd against the Akhals, and Meshed against the Tekkes, a few months would see the end of this crying evil; or if some faint spirit still lingered amongst them, efficient arrangements on the frontier from Meshed to Herat would soon stamp it out. This seems, to my humble view, a work for which Russia and England may well lay aside their rivalry, and join in granting to the wretched people of Persia on the Turcoman border the security and freedom they have not known for ages.

"The sacrifices they would be called on to make to secure this end, are as nothing compared with what these countries have already undergone. Russia has released millions of her own subjects from serfdom, and England has paid millions to secure freedom to the negro races of Africa. Here they would only be required to throw the weight of their influence, manfully and honestly, into the scale in order to force Persia to rouse itself, and the khanates to cease from slave-purchase. If the rich people of Europe, and far more of England, would but give of their plenty a tithe to assist, the good work might be crowned by the raising of a subscription sufficient to set every slave free, from Siberia to the Persian Gulf.

"The case, too, seems to me one worthy of far more sympathy than that of the African negroes. In the latter case the slaves are taken from a country steeped in barbarism, to one where their condition in the material requirements of food, clothing, and shelter are immeasurably bettered; in the former, an intelligent people, with a certain amount of civilisation, are carried off to be the slaves of those who are

inferior to them in all the amenities of life, and aliens in religion.

"No doubt the Russians have already done a good deal by releasing the slaves at Khiva, but much remains to be done; the evil is scotched, not killed. To be of any use, it must be stamped out without any reserve; and it seems to me that this would be work far more worthy of great powers than a rivalry for more land, when both have more than they can well manage."

A Persian chief at Astrabad, in talking to Fraser of his "expeditions, past and proposed, against the Turcomans, declared that it would be his ruin to be too successful against them. 'To what end,' said he, 'should I destroy these people? What thanks should I receive from Futeh Allee Shah? To have my eyes put out like so-and-so, whose crime it was to have been too successful.'" Improvement in Khorassan Colonel McGregor declares to be impossible with the "accursed Persian system of mingled tyranny and imbecility. It would be impossible for the best man under the sun to make his district all that it might be, if he were under the orders of the imbecile vapourers who form the ministry at Teheran; for if he did, it would soon be said that he was becoming too powerful, and he would be straightway plundered if they dared to plunder him, or, if not, induced to pay heavy bribes to be let alone."

These extracts are sufficient to show the relations between Persia and the Turcomans, and the manner they mutually treat one another. The Central Asian khanates to-day exercise but feeble influence over the nomads; but Bokhara is still the suzerain

of the Ersaris, and the Turcomans of that tribe and the Tekkes probably experience at times, when caught red-handed in their forays, some such fate as that which Vámbéry saw meted out to captured raiders in 1863.

"In the last court of the Khan of Khiva's palace I found about 300 Tchaudors, prisoners of war, covered with rags. They were so tormented by the dread of their approaching fate, and by the hunger which they had endured several days, that they looked as if they had just risen from their graves. They were separated into two divisions, namely, such as had not yet reached their fortieth year, and were to be sold as slaves, or to be made use of as presents, and such as from their rank or age were regarded as Aksakals (grey-beards) or leaders, and who were to suffer the punishment imposed by the Khan. The former, chained together by their iron collars in numbers of ten to fifteen, were led away; the latter submissively awaited the punishment awarded. They looked like lambs in the hands of their executioners. Whilst several were led to the gallows or the block, I saw how, at a sign from the executioner, eight aged men placed themselves down on their backs upon the earth. They were then bound hand and foot, and the executioner gouged out their eyes in turn, kneeling to do so on the breast of each poor wretch; and after every operation he wiped his knife, dripping with blood, upon the white beard of the hoary unfortunate.

"Ah! cruel spectacle! As each fearful act was completed, the victim, liberated from his bonds, groping around with his hands, sought to gain his feet. Some fell against each other, head against

head; others sank powerless to the earth again, uttering low groans, the memory of which will make me shudder as long as I live.

"However dreadful these details may seem to the reader, they must still be told that this cruelty was only a retaliation for a no less barbarous act committed by the Tchaudors last winter upon an Uzbek caravan. It was a rich one, composed of 2,000 camels, which, on its way from Orenburg to Khiva, was surprised and entirely plundered. The Turcomans, greedy of booty, although they had taken possession of stores of Russian merchandise, despoiled the travellers (for the most part Khivan Uzbeks) of their victuals and clothes, so that they died in the middle of the desert, some of hunger and others of cold; only eight out of 60 contrived to save their lives."

Since 1863 Russia has annexed Khiva and posted a garrison at Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk. Captain Burnaby found things very different in 1875 to what they had been 12 years earlier, when Vámbéry limped, in rags, into the city, "a fearfully disfigured Hadji." But he had no thanks to give the Russians.

"Formerly the Kirghiz and Turcomans lived in a continual state of war. The Kirghiz made marauding expeditions into their neighbours' territory, and carried off horses and cattle. Their foe, in his turn, frequently crossed the Oxus in armed bands of from 50 to 60 horsemen, plundered the Kirghiz kibitkas, and carried away the spoil. At the present moment, from Russian sources, we only hear of the marauding disposition of the Turcomans, and of the peaceful disposition of the Kirghiz. The Turcoman raids are purposely exaggerated, in the same

way as previously the Khivans were maligned. This is done as an excuse for a subsequent advance upon Merv. The fact is, that if the Kirghiz carry off a Turcoman's cattle, no one hears of it. If, on the contrary, the latter crosses the Oxus by way of retaliation, it is made the subject for a tirade of abuse.

"Colonel Ivanoff, the Commandant at Petro-Alexandrovsk, has found time to attack some bands of nomad Turcomans. On one occasion he made prisoners of two of these Arabs of the steppes. They had robbed, it was said, some Russian Kirghiz. In consequence of this the captive Turcomans were tried by court-martial and sentenced to death. The sentence was shortly afterwards put into execution. The Turcomans on their side have captured a Russian soldier. They refuse to surrender him until such time as they receive a sum of money, perhaps to go the widows of their fellow-countrymen. The man has not been tried by court-martial by the Turcomans, probably on account of their ignorance of military law. When they become more civilised they will doubless follow the example set them by their Christian foe."

During Vámbéry's stay at Gomush Tepé, near the mouth of the Atrek, in 1863, not a night passed without a shot echoing from the sea-shore to announce the arrival of some piratical vessel, laden with slaves and booty captured from the Persian villages lying inland of the sea-board of Mazendran. "The last case of piracy* occurred in 1869. The Russian steam corvette *Kurd*, now in private hands,

* O'Donovan.

while commanded by Lieutenant Sidoroff, overhauled two large pirate launches, manned by 17 Turcomans, who were carrying off 10 Persian captives. The Persians were taken on board the *Kurd*, the commander of which then ran down the launches, the crews of which perished to a man. After this example piracy entirely ceased, and the addition of new war-ships to the Caspian flotilla rendered its renewal impossible. For this prompt, and as it proved, salutary act, the Shah of Persia conferred on Gospodin Sidoroff the decoration of the 'Lion and the Sun' of the first class. This the rank of lieutenant did not permit him to carry; but the Czar, to meet the exigency, and as a reward, immediately promoted him."

These pirates may be said to have richly deserved their fate, but no such severe punishment was needed for the Yomood Turcomans, so cruelly treated by General Kaufmann after the Khivan campaign of 1873. These Turcomans had behaved exceedingly well to the Russian exploring parties sent among them, and it was only the desire of General Kaufmann to gain the order of St. George that led him to declare war. Even had the Yomoods been the blood-thirsty robbers the Tekkes were reputed to be—which they were not, being a comparatively peaceable and settled tribe—the Russian general could not have treated them with greater brutality A contribution of 300,000 roubles was imposed upon them, to be paid within an impossibly short space of time. "Then followed an evident breach of faith.*

* Schuyler's *Turkistan*.

The next day, July 18th, five of the elders were sent back to their families and tribes to declare the necessity of paying the contribution, while the remaining 12 were retained as hostages until the money should all be paid. As if to make it still more evident that his real meaning was war, on that very day General Kaufmann, by a written order to General Golovatcheff, directed the forces to march and attack the Turcomans, without even waiting for the 15 days of grace to expire. General Kaufmann added, 'If your Excellency sees that the Yomoods are not getting together money, but are assembling for the purpose of opposing our troops, or perhaps even for leaving the country, I order you immediately to move upon the settlements of the Yomoods, which are placed along the Hazavat canal and its branches, *and to give over the settlements of the Yomoods and their families to complete destruction, and their herds and property to confiscation.*' The disposition of the troops was to be such as to cut off the Turcomans from the steppe, and to surround them, so that they should have no hope of escape."

Gospodin Gromoff, an eye-witness, related to Mr. Schuyler what followed :—"When we had gone about 25 miles from Khiva, General Golovatcheff said before a large number of officers in my presence: 'I have received an order from the Commander-in-Chief—I hope you will remember it and give it to your soldiers. This expedition does not spare either sex or age. Kill all of them.' After this the officers delivered this command to their several detachments The detachment of the Caucasus army had not yet arrived, but came that evening. Golovatcheff called

together the officers of the Caucasus and said: 'I hope you will fufil all these commands strictly, *in the Circassian style*, without a question. You are not to spare either sex or age. Kill all of them.' The old Colonel of the Caucasus said, 'Certainly; we will do exactly as you say.'"

"On the 7th, when we began to meet the Turcomans, these orders were again brought to mind, and nearly everyone whom we met was killed. The Cossacks seemed to get quite furious, and rushed on them with their sabres, cutting everybody down, whether a small child or an old man. I saw several of such cases. I remember one case in particular which I could not look at for more than a moment, and rode hastily by. A mother, who had been riding on horseback with three children, was lying dead. The eldest child was dead also. The youngest had a sabre-cut through its arm, and, while crying, was wiping off the blood. The other child, a little older, who was trying to wake up the dead mother, said to me, 'Tiura—stop.'"

On the 10th of July, General Kaufmann issued an order: "If the Yomoods become submissive, stop ravaging them, but keep watch of what is being done among them, and at the least attempt to migrate, carry out my order for the *final extermination of the disobedient tribe.*" Gromoff continues:—"On the 17th we burned—as we had done before—grain, houses, and everything which we met, and the cavalry, which was in advance, cut down every person, man, woman, or child. Many of the men had gone, although a few of them got up and fired at us. They were generally women and children whom we met. I saw

much cruelty. The infantry came at a run behind, running fully 18 miles, and continued the work of murder."

It is unnecessary to quote, in support of these statements, Mr. MacGahan, who chronicles similar sights in his *Campaigning on the Oxus*, and who, with his own American eyes, saw children hacked to pieces by the Cossacks, and women outraged. Mr. Gladstone, intellectually disabled by Russophile fever in 1876, attempted to palliate this massacre, on the publication of Schuyler's book. But though he might run his head against facts, and obstinately attempt to suppress them—and his conscience—because they clashed with his prejudices and party opinions, he could not destroy them. They stand out to-day as bloody as ever, coupled with the many barbarities inflicted by the Russian troops during the Turkish campaign, and the massacre of women and children at Dengeel Tepé by General Lomakin in 1879.

This second massacre brings us back again to the Turcomans. In September 1879, Lomakin invaded the Akhal oasis. The Akhal Tekkes retreated before him and ensconsed themselves at Dengeel or Geok Tepé, throwing up clay ramparts round the camp, which contained 15,000 men and 5,000 women and children. Lomakin met no resistance on his way to the camp, and was able without any difficulty to plant his artillery on a hill commanding the place a few hundred yards from the outer rampart. The Tekkes were only armed with muskets, sabres, and pikes, while the Russians had breechloaders, field-guns, and rockets. General Lomakin made no attempt to parley with the enemy, though he could see

that the camp contained women and children, but gave orders for the guns to fire at once against the crowded tents. After the first fifteen or twenty shots the Tekkes began to flee from the camp, upon which Tekme Sardar, a friendly chief, applied for permission to go among his countrymen to persuade them to surrender.

This offer was refused, and when he applied a second time his mediation was again rejected by Lomakin. The Tekkes attempting to flee were driven back to the camp by the cavalry.

"Shortly* after 3 o'clock the wretched Tekkes saw the ring around them strengthened by the arrival of Russian reinforcements, and before long twelve guns and eight rockets searched every corner of the encampment. The devastation was now awful. The rockets tore their way through the lines of crowded tents, killing and maiming hundreds of women and children. The shot and shell from the cannon on the hills around the camp struck every spot that seemed to offer shelter, and pursued the flying crowds of panic-stricken fugitives from place to place, every moment thinning their ranks and covering the ground with the dead and the dying. Those who attempted to escape from the aoul were at once shot down by the Russian soldiers.

"Imagining that the wrath of the enemy was directed chiefly against themselves, the defenders of the aoul made the women and children collect on the south side of the camp and issue in the direction of the mountains, at the foot of which was an aban-

* *The Disastrous Russian Campaign against the Akhal Tekke Turcomans.*

doned settlement, out of the reach of the artillery, where they might find shelter. At 4 o'clock the fugitives began their flight from the camp, but had not gone far when they perceived a detachment of the Russian cavalry riding towards them from the Askabat road. They still continued their advance, but before many minutes had elapsed they were stopped by dragoons and Daghestanis, who shouted to them to turn back. Thinking the Russians to be sensible to the dictates of humanity, the women threw themselves at their feet and begged for mercy. 'Even if you wish to kill us all,' they cried, holding out their suckling babes and weeping bitterly, 'have mercy at least upon the little ones. In the name of the Prophet, do not send them back to the aoul to be mangled before our eyes by the cruel shot and shell from your cannon!'

"The commander of the cavalry was a brave and tender man. He sympathized deeply with the fugitives. But he had his orders from the Chief of the Staff—'Allow none to escape'!—and Colonel Malam was himself watching from the Askabat road. Much against his will, he ordered them back, closing his ears to their lamentations and their appeals for mercy. Some of the fugitives threw themselves on the ground, fancying that they would at least be made prisoners of war if they remained behind; but the troopers had no order to encumber themselves with captives, and they pressed their horses upon them and used their whips, until at last they had to rise up and join the weeping crowd of women and children that was being driven back to the aoul to be slaughtered.

"His task finished, Prince Golitzin returned towards the foot of the Kopet Dagh, while the Russian artillery commenced its havoc afresh among the shrieking masses of women and children. 'For hours,' says General Lomakin, 'it played upon them with terrible effect.'* 'Affecting were the scenes,' writes the Correspondent of the *Novoe Vremya*, 'but war always will be war.' Yes, always will be cruel, devilish war, so long as it is conducted *à la Russe*."

This is not the place to describe the storming of the aoul and the terrible chastisement the Russians received when they got alongside the maddened Tekkes; both are fully described in the work referred to. But I cannot help quoting an extract from a Russian book recently published,† dealing with England and Russia in Central Asia. The author is an officer who has earned his laurels in Turkestan, and has made a reputation as a writer on military subjects. Oblivious of Kaufmann's savagery in 1873, and Lomakin's shocking cruelty in 1879, he says, in denouncing General Roberts for executing 70 Afghan fanatics, impartially tried and justly condemned at Cabul for their complicity in the massacre of Major Cavagnari and the members of the English Embassy:—"Russian officers and soldiers are merciful towards the enemy. Here lies the secret of our prestige and our

* Lomakin, in his despatch, says:—"During six hours our 12 cannon kept up a continued fire on the fortified settlement, where were collected nearly all the population of Akhal, including women and children, more than 20,000 persons. The effect of our artillery was terrible. The Turcoman prisoners say that several thousands of their people were killed."

† *Anglo-Afghanskaya Raspria* (*The Anglo-Afghan Conflict*), by Colonel Soboleff, of the Russian Etat Major, the Central Asian critic of the *Rooski Invalide* (St. Petersburg, 1880).

strength, and it is with this weapon that we shall conquer the English in Asia"! Colonel Soboleff, I should add, is not a contributor to *Punch*, and I have never yet heard of his sanity being questioned by his countrymen.

That the Turcomans are callous and cruel no one can deny, but from the illustrations given it will be seen that neither the Khivans, nor the Persians, nor yet the Russians, have set them a good example. Let me bring the chapter to a close with the words that Conolly wrote fifty years ago, in finishing his account of the Turcomans:—"I will not conclude the notice of these barbarians quite in the spirit of Meshed-e-Nourouz, who prayed that both they, their ancestors, and their posterity might be accursed; but, for humanity's sake, I will express a hope that their power may be broken, *though not by the Russians.*"

CHAPTER XIII.

SLAVERY AMONG THE TURCOMANS.

Feelings of a Persian slave.—Bondsmen in chains.—Torture of Persians.—Sufferings of kidnapped men.—A sight in the Atrek region.—Return of a kidnapping party with their prey.—Dreadful scenes.—The modern slave trade.—Sufferings of slaves in crossing the desert.—The song of the poor "Guzl-baash."—Burnes' encounter with Persian slaves bound for Bokhara.—Slave life in the Central Asian khanates.—Narratives of slaves.—Searching for lost friends in Central Asia.—Persia and the suppression of the slave trade.—Fifteen thousand mounted robbers.—A shocking spectacle in the slave market of Bokhara.—Treatment of slaves in Bokhara.—Their value.—How slaves used to ransom themselves in Khiva.—Slaves at Merv.—The slave trade past and present.—The Turcomans and Persian maidens.—Our responsibility for the prevalence of slavery in Afghanistan.—Turcoman arguments in favour of the slave trade.—How a dervish tricked a Tekke who had robbed him of his liberty.

"Within earth's wide domains
Are markets for men's lives;
Their necks are galled with chains,
Their wrists are cramped with gyves."—LONGFELLOW.

"To the rattle of chains I could never habituate my ears: it is heard in the tent of every Turcoman who has any pretensions to respectability or position."—VÁMBÉRY.

"Let us* only picture to ourselves the feelings of a Persian, even admitting that he is the poorest of his race, who is surprised by a night attack, hurried away from his family, and brought to Turkmenia a prisoner, and often wounded. He has to exchange his dress for old Turcoman rags that only scantily cover parts of his body, and is heavily laden with chains that gall his ankles, and occasion him great and unceasing pain every step he takes; he is forced upon the poorest diet to linger the first days, often weeks, of his captivity. That he may make no attempt at flight, he has also during the night a Karabogra (iron ring) attached to his neck and fastened to a peg, so that the rattle betrays even his slightest movements. The Persian, who is cunning even in his misfortune, always contrives to conceal his real position. He is, therefore, subjected to much ill-treatment, until, by the lamentations which he forwards to his home, his captors have squeezed from his friends the highest possible ransom, and it is only when that arrives that his torment ceases."

In another work, Vámbéry affirms that "the lot of the negro, confined in the close hold of a ship during his passage from Africa to America, is sufficiently hard, yet it is not less hard to be bound behind the saddle of a nomad with the feet tied under the belly of the horse, to be insufficiently supplied with food and water, and to be thus transported for days across the weary desert, far from one's dear country and the bosom of one's family. These privations of savage life in the tent of the rude nomad and

* Vámbéry.

under an inclement sky are the harder for the Persian to bear, as at home he is accustomed to cooked food and the comforts of civilised life. In addition to these sufferings he is continually the object of the revilings, curses, and blows of his tyrannical master. Indeed the first stage of his slavery is the most grievous."

The same writer, in his *Sketches of Central Asia*, gives a graphic description of the return to the Atrek of the Turcomans with their prey:—"I entered the tent of Khandjan after the morning-prayer and found here a whole company, listening with the greatest attention to the narrative of a young Turcoman, who was covered with dust and dirt, and whose face bore evident traces of excitement and severe hardships. He was describing in a low voice, but in lively colours, a marauding excursion against the Persians of the evening before, in which he had taken part. Whilst he was speaking, the women, servants, and slaves (what must have been the thoughts of these latter), squatted down around the circle of listeners, and many a curse was hurled at the slaves, the clanking of the chains on their feet interrupting for a time the general quiet. It struck me as remarkable, that, in proportion as the speaker warmed in describing the obstinate resistance of the unfortunate people, who were fallen on unawares, the indignation of the audience increased at the audacity of the Persians, not to have at once quietly submitted to being plundered.

"No sooner was the narration of this great feat of arms at an end, when all rose to their feet to have a look at the spoils, the sight of which

excites in the Turcoman's breast a mixed feeling of envy and pleasure. I followed them likewise, and a terrible picture presented itself to my eyes. Lying down in the middle of the tent were two Persians, looking deadly pale and covered with clotted blood, dirt, and dust. A man was busily engaged in putting their broken limbs into fetters, when one of them gave a loud, wild shriek, the rings of the chains being too small for him. The cruel Turcoman was about to fasten them forcibly round his ancles. In a corner sat two young children on the ground, pale and trembling, and looking with sorrowful eyes towards the tortured Persian. The unhappy man was their father; they longed to weep but dared not;—one look of the robber, at whom they stole a glance now and then, with their teeth chattering, was sufficient to suppress their tears. In another corner a girl, from 15 to 16 years old, was crouching, her hair dishevelled and in confusion, her garments torn, and almost entirely covered with blood. She groaned and sobbed, covering her face with her hands. Some Turcoman woman, moved either by compassion or curiosity, asked what ailed her, and where she was wounded. 'I am not wounded,' she exclaimed, in a plaintive voice, deeply touching. 'This blood is the blood of my mother, my only one, and the best and kindest of mothers. Oh! ana djan, ana djan (mother dear!)' Thus she lamented, striking her head against the trellised wood-work of the tent, so that it almost tumbled down. They offered her a draught of water, and her tongue became loosened, and she told them how she, of course a valuable prize, had been lifted

into the saddle beside the robber, but that her mother, tied to the stirrups, had been obliged to run along on foot. After an hour's running in this manner, she grew so tired that she sank down exhausted every moment. The Turcoman tried to increase her strength by lashing her with his whip, but this was of no avail; and as he did not want to remain behind from his troop he grew in a rage, drew his sword, and in a second struck off her head. The blood spurting up had covered the daughter, horseman, and horse; and, looking at the red spots upon her clothes, the poor girl wept loud and bitterly.

"Whilst this was going on in the interior of the tent, outside the various members of the robber's family were busy inspecting the booty he had brought home. The elder women seized greedily upon one or another utensil for domestic use, whilst the children, who were jumping about merrily, were trying on the different garments,—now one, now another, and producing shouts of laughter.

"Here all was triumph and merriment; not far from it a picture of the deepest grief and misery. And yet no one is struck by the contrast; everyone thinks it very natural that the Turcoman should enrich himself by robbery and pillage."

It was not until after Vámbéry's return to Europe (1865), that the Russians conquered in succession Bokhara (1868), and Khiva (1873), and effectually put a stop to the slave trade in Turkestan. No traveller, since Vámbéry's time, has traversed Turkmenia and brought back accounts of the modern traffic of slaves among the Turcomans, but from the writings of earlier travellers, and from Vámbéry's *Travels* themselves,

may be collected scenes that will enable the English reader to realise the feelings and the fate of the unfortunate captives torn to-day from their homes in sunny Khorassan.

Abbott, while proceeding across the desert from Merv to Khiva in 1840, met a caravan bound for the same city as himself. "They had brought," he says, "grain from Khiva, and were returning thither laden with slaves, many of whom were natives of Herat. The whole number, men, women, and children, may have been about twenty-five. Some of the women were decently clad, and seemed to have been in good circumstances until seized for this inhuman traffic. One poor female was mounted astraddle upon a camel behind her master. Her child, an infant, was lodged in a grain-bag hanging from the saddle. This poor wretch had an inhuman master, and was the picture of misery. Her master had lost two children to the Persians, and was trying by this horrible trade to raise money for the purchase of their freedom. The men were chained together by the throats at night, so that rest was scarcely possible, while the contact of the frozen iron with their skin must have been a torture. For them no carriage was found, they walked the whole way, every step of which rendered their captivity more hopeless."

Wolff, in his eccentric impersonal style, describes, in the account of his caravan journey from Merv to Bokhara, the sad fate of Persian slaves traversing the desert in the depth of winter:—"Wolff was accompanied by Bokhara merchants, who had bought at Sarakhs two Persian boys as slaves, whom they were going to bring to Bokhara to sell. The one was eleven

years of age, and the other nine. The Turcomans universally call the Persians *Guzl-baash*,* *i.e.* 'Red Head.' Wandering through the desert the two poor Guzl-baash slaves were singing in the morning, and during the day, and in the evening, in plaintive strains, the following words:—

'The Al-ammaan have taken us,
Poor, poor Guzl-baash!
And carry us, and carry us,
In iron and chains, in iron and chains,
To Organtsh† and Bokhara.'

Thus they proceeded through the desert, continually hearing that plaintive strain. The desert was covered with snow, and Wolff's servants made the tea and cooked the victuals with melted snow. And, before they laid down to rest, they had to sweep the ground clear from the snow; and, whilst they were lying down, the poor Guzl-baash began again to sing their plaintive melody:—

'The Al-ammaan have taken us,
Poor, poor Guzl-baash!
And carry us, and carry us,
In iron and chains, in iron and chains,
To Organtsh and Bokhara.'"

Burnes, traversing the desert in the other direction, from Bokhara to Merv, met "in the middle of our march seven unfortunate Persians, who had been captured by the Turcomans, and were now on their road to Bokhara, where they would be sold. Five of

* Also written Kizil Bash. "Kizil Bash or Red Head is a sort of nickname given from old times to the Persians."—*Adventures of Hajji Baba*.—C. M.

† Khiva.

them were chained together, and trod their way through the deep sand. There was a general shout of compassion as the caravan passed these miserable beings; and the sympathy did not fail to affect the poor creatures themselves. They cried, and gave a longing look, as the last camel of the caravan passed to their dear native country. The camel on which I rode happened to be in the rear, and I stayed to hear their tale of woe. They had been seized by the Turcomans at Ghaeen, near Meshed, a few weeks before, when the culture of their fields had led them beyond the threshold of their homes. They were weary and thirsty, and I gave them all I could—a single melon; a civility, little as it was, which was received with gratitude. What a frightful notion must these unfortunate beings have entertained of the country which they were entering, after their travels in such a desert! The Turcomans evince but little compassion for their Persian slaves; and what other treatment is to be expected from men who pass their lives in capturing and selling human beings? They give them but a scanty supply of food and water, that they may waste their strength, and prevent their escape; but beyond this the Turcoman inflicts no other ills. The tales which have been circulated of their cutting the sinew of the heel and of their passing a cord round the collar-bone, are at variance with truth, since these blemishes would diminish the value of the slave. These unfortunate captives suffer a much heavier calamity—they lose their liberty."

In Burnes' caravan were eight or ten Persians, who had passed many years of slavery in Turkestan,

and, after purchasing their liberty, were now returning by stealth to their homes. "I conversed with several of them, and it was equally painful to hear their past sufferings and present anxiety. Their influential countrymen in the caravan had put several of them in charge of a portion of their merchandise, that they might be the less noticed, and considered rather as traders than emancipated slaves; for a Persian merchant in a caravan is generally safe. In spite of all this arrangement, some hard-hearted wretches had told tales on the banks of the Oxus; one individual had been forced to return to Bokhara, and some of the others had crossed with difficulty. One single hint to the people of Khiva would, in all probability, yet arrest their further progress; but everyone had been well tutored. What must be the feelings of some of these men as they approach Persia! One of them told me that he had had a wife and a numerous family when sold into captivity, twenty-two years before; of whom he had not heard any account since that period. If any of them are alive, the parent will show himself among them as an apparition from the tomb. Another of these unfortunate individuals had a tale which was not less touching. He had been seized along with his family, and, indeed, all the inhabitants of his village, near Toorshish, and delivered up by one of the Khorassan chiefs to the Turcomans, who drove on this occasion upwards of 100 people to Bokhara. At Maimene, which is on the road, they were disposed of to other Turcomans, and at Bokhara finally sold. There this unfortunate man saw his wife sold to one, his daughter and son to others, and himself to a diffe-

rent person. A humane man, hearing of his misfortunes, released him, since he believed it good in the sight of God; and the poor fellow lurked in Bokhara, like a bird near its rest that is robbed, in hopes of relieving the other members of his family. He had failed, and was now travelling into his own country, to excite, if possible, the compassion and pity of those who had known him in his prosperity. It would harrow up a man's heart, to listen to all the tales of woe inflicted upon mankind by these plundering Turcomans."

When Burnes returned to England hopes were expressed that the Shah of Persia might see his way to put down the Turcoman slave-trade, yet, thirty years later, Vámbéry, trudging manfully, in spite of his lame foot, from Bokhara to Herat, was compelled to chronicle exactly the same kind of scenes. "There were in the caravan, many others besides myself who were longing to reach the southernmost frontiers of Central Asia. These were the emancipated slaves, with whom Hadjis were intermixed, and I had an opportunity of witnessing the most heart-rending incidents. Near me was an old man—a father—bowed down by years. He had ransomed, at Bokhara, his son, a man in his thirtieth year, in order to restore a protector to his family left behind—that is to say, to his daughter-in-law a husband, to his children a father. The price was fifty ducats, and its payment had reduced the poor old man to beggary. 'But,' said he to me, 'rather the beggar's staff than my son in chains.' His home was Khaf in Persia.

"From the same city, not far from us, was another man, still of active strength, but his hair had turned

grey with sorrow, for he had been despoiled by the Turcomans, some eight years ago, of wife, sister, and six children. The unfortunate man had to wander from place to place a whole year in Khiva and Bokhara, to discover the spot in which those near members of his family were languishing in captivity. After a long search he found that his wife, sister, and two youngest children had succumbed under the severity of their servitude, and that, of the four children that survived, he could only ransom half. The remaining two having besides grown up, the sum demanded for them was beyond his means. Farther on sat a young man from Herat, who had ransomed his mother. Only two years ago, this woman, now in her fiftieth year, was, with her husband and eldest son, surprised by an alaman. After seeing those near relatives both fall, in self defence, under the lances and swords of the Turcomans, she experienced herself unceasing sufferings until sold for sixteen ducats in Bokhara. The owner, discovering a son in him who sought to ransom her, exacted a double amount, thus turning filial piety to cruelly usurious account. Nor must I omit to mention another unhappy case—that of an inhabitant of Tebbes. He was captured eight years ago, and after the lapse of two years he was ransomed by his father. They were both returning home, and were three leagues from their native city, when they were suddenly attacked by the Turcomans, taken prisoners, led back to Bokhara, and again sold as slaves. Now, they were a second time freed, and were being conveyed to their homes.

"But why any longer distress the reader with

these cruelties? Unfortunately, the above are only a few sketches of that lamentable plague by which, for centuries, those districts, but more especially the north-eastern part of Persia, have been depopulated. Amongst the Tekke Turcomans are reckoned at the the present hour more than 15,000 mounted robbers, who are intent upon kidnapping expeditions night and day; and one can easily form an idea of how many houses and villages are devastated, how much family happiness destroyed, by these greedy free-booters."

A Persian who had accompanied a mission to Bokhara, related to Conolly a sight he saw there in the slave market, where the Turcomans were selling their captives to the Bokharans. "At the head of the bazaar I stopped, to watch a bargain that an Uzbek was driving for a very beautiful Persian girl, so beautiful, I beg leave to state, that I have not seen her like. A neck a cubit long; eyes, large as—this cup (taking up from the *sofra*—table-cloth—one which helped him to a simile); her tears fell like the rain in spring, and she was altogether so lost in grief that she appeared bereft of her senses. Her master treated her with the grossest brutality, making her rise and uncover herself, that her intended purchaser might see the beauties of her person. Once he rudely snatched the veil from off her, and God is witness, that when from shame she crossed her arms over her bosom, he cut her on the back with a whip to make her withdraw them; further, what shall I say? —my heart burned, and I became as nothing; but I was powerless, a stranger, and without the means to ransom her.—'Inshallah,' a day will come!"

The Persian slaves in Bokhara do not appear to have been generally ill-treated, although they were made to work hard, and were liable to be tortured and killed by brutal masters. Baron Meyendorf saw a Russian slave who had had his ears cut off, his hands pierced with a nail, the skin stripped from his back, and boiling oil poured over his arms, to make him confess in what direction his comrade had fled. Burnes saw Persian slaves—many of whom had once been persons of affluence—working in the broiling heat of the mid-day sun, gathering the crops, although the thermometer was 96° within doors. Meyendorf, indignant though he was at the sight of so many of his fellow countrymen in slavery, was bound to admit, however, that they were generally well treated, being greatly valued as field-labourers and gardeners. Their great complaint was, that even after their ransom was paid they were not allowed to return to Russia. The value of a robust Russian labourer was from £25 to £32; of a skilled artisan, double that amount; and of a young woman, if good looking, as much as £100. Burnes made friends with several Persian slaves and obtained a good insight into their condition. He says: "Many save enough to redeem themselves; for a Persian is sharper than an Uzbek, and does not fail to profit by his opportunities. At Meerabad, two or three slaves had gathered sums that would liberate them, but though they fully intended to avail themselves of an opportunity to return to Persia, I never heard these people, in my different communications with them, complain of the treatment they experienced in Turkestan. It is true, that some of their masters objected to them saying their prayers, and observing

the holidays prescribed by the Koran, since such sanctity deprived them of their labour; but they were never beaten, were clothed and fed as if they belonged to the family, and were often treated with great kindness. The practice of enslaving the Persians is said to have been unknown before the invasion of the Uzbeks; and some even say that it has not continued for a hundred years." Elsewhere, however, he was compelled to admit, "that it has been observed that Mahomedan slavery differs widely from that of the negroes, nor is the remark untrue; but the capture of the inhabitants of Persia, and their forcible exile among strangers, where neither their creed nor prejudices are respected, is as odious a violation of human rights and liberties as the African slave-trade."

In Khiva the Persians were not so well treated when Abbott visited the khanate. "The Uzbek has often several hundred of these unhappy drudges, whom he can afford to purchase from the Turcoman. He is a hard master, and, as a man, one of the most degraded of God's creatures; living a life of sullen and joyous apathy, chequered only by debauches of the grossest character, and indulgences too brutal to be named. When sufficiently wealthy he commits his domestic affairs to the hand of a steward, and sits in his house from day to day, without occupation, slumbering his life away. His wife has the keeping of his purse, and, being utterly neglected by her brutal lord, amuses herself at his expense, and frequently without even the decency of concealment. As every house has one or two small carts drawn by the Kuzzack galloway, she mounts such as often as she

feels inclined, and takes a jaunt into the wilderness with the male slave whom she favours. This species of debauchery is the only hope held out to the unhappy slave of obtaining his liberty—for if he can establish himself in her good graces, he is enriched by her liberality, and, after 15 or 16 years, is able to purchase his discharge."

Wolff describes the treatment of slaves at Merv: "At Merv Wolff had the unbounded gratification of ransoming several Persian slaves, whom he sent back to Persia at his own expense. The poor people actually came and fell down at his feet, which they kissed from their excessive gratitude. Yet he could not but feel astonished at observing that many of these Persian slaves became so accustomed to, and satisfied with their condition, that they are intrusted by their masters with merchandize and money, and are sent back to Persia to transact business for them; to the very country where, on their arrival, they might safely declare themselves free, and remain with the whole property. But so far from doing this, they faithfully come back to their masters, and deliver to them the profits they have made by the sale of their goods. Wolff asked several of the slaves about their becoming so well accustomed to their slavery, and they assigned the following reasons:—Firstly,—That they might be made slaves again. Secondly,—That they are well treated by their masters. Thirdly,—That they love the fresh air of the desert. Fourthly,—That they might eventually ransom themselves, and then live securely as free men. Fifthly,—That the Persians are treated by their Kings and Satraps worse than slaves. These reasons speak well for the Turco-

mans, who treat their slaves so kindly, and they speak volumes against the Government of Persia. And Wolff has actually seen in his two journeys to Bokhara, beautiful country-houses and palaces belonging to Persians" (in Bokhara, not in Turkmenia) "who were once slaves: and many of those who are still slaves occupy the highest situations in the State of Bokhara."

Vámbéry, however, may be cited, to clench the case in his own vigorous fashion. Referring to the argument that in Turkestan, as in Turkey, poor slaves used to rise to affluence and high official rank, and that they were kindly treated in houses of distinction, he asserts that such cases were exceptional, and that such good fortune depended for the most part on the personal beauty of the favoured few. "What became of the greater number, whose charms were not such as to gain the favour of their master? What shall be said of this majority, exposed as they were to the oppression and cruelty of a tyrannical master, and constantly employed in the hardest labour? Such things are of course not taken into account, any more than the original cruelty of the slave-merchant, who tears his victims from their homes and their friends. On the banks of the Oxus few persons care to picture to their minds the horrors of that first moment of separation. How many orphans, how many widows, how many aged and helpless parents, are left behind to wring their hands in sorrow for their bread-winner, who is carried into captivity! It is impossible to count them, it is impossible to describe the miserable condition of so many villages and districts which are exposed to the terrible scourge of the slave-trade. The

traveller in those regions stumbles at every step over the most melancholy traces of the devastation which it causes. However certain he may feel of the splendid destiny which awaits this or that individual captive, he must still exclaim:—'This is the most execrable occupation that has ever defiled the hands of man, and its suppression is the first and holiest duty which our western civilisation has to perform for the cause of humanity!'"

In former times a Persian slave had a chance—one chance in a thousand, but still a chance—of rising to position and affluence in Khiva and Bokhara. To-day, however, if unransomed by his friends, his lot at Merv is that of the commonest labourer, with no other prospect than that of death after years of hard work, scanty food, and constant suffering. Fifteen years ago the Turcoman never retained a slave for his own use, except, as Vámbéry defined it, "(1) when his captive is old or crippled, and yet not so much so but that he works enough to earn his meagre sustenance; if he cannot, he is at once mercilessly cut down; (2) infants, who are brought up as Turcomans to become the wildest of robbers; (3) when Cupid makes some pretty brunette of an Iranian so dear to him that he cannot make up his mind to part with her. This last case, however, happens but seldom, as the Turcomans are notoriously the greatest misers in the world. As, besides, they are wanting in that feeling of delicacy for which the Circassian houri-dealers are so renowned, the harems of Khiva and Bokhara receive many flowers which have lost their freshness in Turcoman hands. The only Persians who are to be found among the inhabitants of

the steppes are such as in their own country would not be much better off, or else escaped criminals who have to continue their former courses of misdoing, of murder and robbery, in conjunction with the nomads."

At present slavery to a slight degree still prevails in Badakshan and other Turkestan khanates of Afghanistan, and it is probable that many Persian girls find their way thither from Merv. For the continuance of this traffic, England, as the Suzerain of Afghanistan, is indirectly responsible. It is probable also that there may be a traffic in Persian boys and girls in Bokhara, but such cannot prevail to any great extent, as Russia insists on the punishment of the guilty parties in every case coming under her notice. The majority of the Persians kidnapped to-day remain as slaves at Merv, and on the conquest of the Tekkes by Russia the slave-trade in Central Asia will practically cease to exist. Great will be England's dishonour if Russia suppresses the traffic in flesh at Merv before we put it down on the Afghan border.

Burnes once remarked to a Turcoman chief:— "You surely do not sell a Syud, one of the sacred descendants of your holy Prophet (on whom be peace!), if he falls among the list of captives?'— 'What, replied he, 'is the holy Koran itself not sold? and why should I not dispose of an infidel Syud, who brings its truth into contempt by his heresy?' These are desperate men; it is a fortunate circumstance that they are divided among one another, or greater might be the evils which they inflict on their fellow-men." Vámbéry tells a similar story. He "once put the question to a robber, renowned for his piety, how he could make up his mind to sell his

Sunni brothers as slaves, when the Prophet's words were 'Kulli Iszlam hurré (every Mussulman is free)'? 'Behey!' said the Turcoman, with supreme indifference, 'the Koran, God's book, is certainly more precious than man, and yet it is bought and sold for a few krans. What more can you say? Yes, Joseph, the son of Jacob, was a prophet, and was himself sold; was he in any respect worse for that?'"

The same writer says that "it is very seldom dervishes in Central Asia are insulted or ill-treated; this, however, is said to be the case amongst the Turcomans, whose rapacity knows no bounds, and prompts them to commit incredible acts of cruelty. A dervish from Bokhara, of robust figure and dark curly hair, whom I met at Maimene, told me that a Tekke Turcoman, prompted by the thirty ducats which his athletic figure promised to fetch in the slave market, made him a prisoner to sell him a few days afterwards. 'I pretended,' my colleague continued, 'to be quite unconcerned, and repeated the Zikr whilst shaking my iron chains. The time was fast approaching when I was to be taken to the market, when suddenly the wife of the robber of my liberty and person was taken ill, and prevented him from starting. He seemed to see in this the finger of God, and began to be pensive, when his favourite horse, refusing to eat his food, showed signs of illness.' This was enough. The robber was so frightened that he removed the chains of his prisoner, and returned to him the things he had robbed him of, begging him to leave his tent as soon as possible. Whilst the Turcoman impatiently awaited the departure of the ominous beggar, the latter fumbled about his dress,

and pretended that he had lost a comb which his chief had given him as a talisman on the road, and without which he could not go a single step. The nomad returned in great haste to the place where the plunder had been kept, and as the comb did not turn up he became still more frightened, and promised the dervish the price of twenty combs if he would only take a single step beyond the boundary of his tent. The cunning bush-rite saw he was master of the situation; he pretended to be inconsolable about the lost property, and declared that he would now have to remain for years in the tent. Imagine the confusion of the deceived and superstitious robber! Like a madman he ran about asking his neighbours for advice. Formal negotiations were now commenced with the dervish, to whom, finally, a horse, a dress, and ten ducats were presented, to make up for the loss of the comb, and on condition that he should leave a tent, whose proprietor will probably think twice before he ventures again to molest a travelling dervish."

CHAPTER XIV.

HISTORY OF MERV.

Petroosevitch on the position of Merv.—Burnes' summary of its history.—Astonishing fertility of the oasis.—Early divisions of Central Asia.—The poet Moore on Merv.—Milton's mention of Merv.—Arab occupation of the city.—Central Asia subject to Merv.—The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan.—Conquest of Merv by the Mongols and terrible slaughter of the inhabitants.—Two centuries of obscurity.—Its successive capture by Uzbeks, Persians, and Bokharans.—The final destruction of Merv by the Emir Murad.—The Mervi.—Burnes' account of the Khivan campaign against Merv.—The desert march from Khiva.—Massacre of the garrison.—The Khivan war of 1855 against Merv.—Death of Khan Medemi.—The disastrous Persian campaign of 1861.—Twenty-five thousand Persians captured by 3,000 Tekkes.—Opinions of Grodekoff, Baker, and Vámbéry on the campaign.—The fate of the Persian general.—Merv for ever lost to Persia.

"The fruits of Merv are finer than those of any other place, and one cannot see in any other city such palaces, with groves and streams and gardens."—The Arab traveller, EBN HAUKAL, 10th century.

"All who have visited the oasis of Merv, speak of it in terms of the warmest admiration. It is a common saying among such persons, that the moment the Russians conquer Merv, large numbers of people will migrate thither from Persia."—COLONEL GRODEKOFF, 1880.

"THE* position of Merv, at the end of a full-flowing river, in a climate permitting very extended culture, and, in particular, in the midst of a desert extending round it for hundreds of miles, renders it peculiarly agreeable to every traveller, exhausted with marches across sandy wastes for days together." Burnes, quoted approvingly by Petroosevitch, thus records his impressions of Merv on his visit in 1832:—"Amid the sterile regions of Turkmenia and between Bokhara and Persia, lies the once fertile land of Merv, the capital of which is said to have been built by Alexander. It is better known to European readers from a celebrated epitaph on one of its kings, often quoted by moral writers: 'You have witnessed the grandeur of Alp Arslan exalted even to the skies; repair to Merv, and see it buried in the dust.' Historians are obscure regarding its history†; it is yet styled, 'Merv Shah-i-Juhan,' or Merv, the king of the world‡; and the natives point to the ruins of 'Merv-i-Mukan,' as the city built by the Greeks. They are better informed on the deeds of Sultan Sunjur, whose tomb yet remains, and who reigned upwards of 800 years since. Merv long continued a dependency of the Persian empire,

* General Petroosevitch.

† It would be a difficult matter at present to set before the reader a complete and accurate summary of the history of Merv. It is only of late years that Merv has acquired political importance, and hence it has not attracted the attention of Orientalists. In a few years' time, when the military *savants* of Russia explore the ruined city, they will write a better account of its rise and fall than any Englishman could to-day by ransacking the libraries of Western Europe.—C. M.

‡ Vámbéry writes it "Mervi-Shah-Djihan," and translates it as "Merv, the Queen of the World"; Grodekoff writes it "Shah Djeharni," and translates it as "Merv, the Tsar of the World," I have selected Vámbéry's rendering as the best.

and here Ismaeel Sefi, the Shah of Persia, defeated the founder of the Uzbeks, Sheibani Khan, A.D. 1510. Under the Persians, Merv rose to a great and opulent country, and the waters of its river, which before had wasted themselves in the desert, were distributed by canals and a judicious use of dams throughout the territory. The soil was enriched; and the people were prosperous. *From one maund reap a hundred*, is a proverb which attests the fecundity of the earth, the prosperity of the people; a portion of a Persian couplet bids the members of the 'faithful' rejoice to say their prayers in the dry and delightful climate of Merv. Here, also, the wheat-fields furnished the astonishing phenomenon of three succeeding crops from the same seed, as has been described in the districts of Andkhoi and Maimene. Such was the prosperous condition of Merv under a well-known chief named Bairam Khan, who was conquered in the year 1787 by Shah Murad of Bokhara. That king demolished its castle and canals, and forcibly marched the greater portion of its inhabitants to people his capital, where they still exist as a separate community. At a later period the remnant of its population has been driven into Persia: and this flourishing land, which presented so beautiful a contrast to the rest of Turkmenia, now partakes of its sterility, while the Turcoman hordes have usurped the place of its once fixed population. From the ruins of the castle of Merv, the traveller may yet behold a depopulated circle of thirty miles, studded with deserted villages and decayed walls. The fields on the verge of the Moorgab are alone cultivated, and the Turco-

mans rear in these days the finest of wheat, juwaree, and excellent melons."

"In* the latter half of the 4th century before the Christian era Central Asia, as known to the Greeks, was divided into the provinces of Margiana, Bactria, and Sogdiana. The first corresponds with Khorassan and the south-eastern portion of the Khanate of Khiva; the second with Badakshan; and the third with the Khanate of Bokhara eastward of the Amu. The fertility of Margiana has been the subject of warm eulogies, Strabo affirming that it was no uncommon thing to meet with a vine, whose stock could hardly be clasped by two men with outstretched arms, while clusters of grapes might be gathered two cubits in length. The chief town, since famous as Merv or Merou, was called Alexandreia after its great founder (about 3281 B.C.), but, falling into decay, was rebuilt by Antiochus Sotor, and named after its restorer, Antiochia Margiana. It stood upon the banks of the Margus,—the Epardus of Arrian, and now the Moorgab,—and the natural beauties of the district have been fitly celebrated by Moore, in his Veiled Prophet of Khorassan:—

> 'In that delightful Province of the Sun
> The first of Persian lands he shines upon,
> Where all the loveliest children of his beam,
> Flow'rets and fruits, blush over every stream,
> And, fairest of all streams, the Murga roves
> Among Merou's bright palaces and groves.'"

Milton also speaks of—

> Margiana to the Hyrcanian cliffs,
> Of Caucasus, and dark Iberian dales.

* Hutton's *Central Asia*.

In Vámbéry's *History of Bokhara* constant reference is made to Merv, and we are enabled thereby to amplify the foregoing. According to that authority, the Arabs in the 7th century frequently encamped at Merv, and passed through it on their way to conquer Central Asia. Early in the 8th century the Arab chief Kuteïbe bin Muslim collected an army at Merv, and proceeded to Balkh to subdue it, returning afterwards in triumph *viâ* Tchardjui. Having rested his troops at Merv, he marched in the year 705 against the cities beyond the Oxus. In this campaign he was entirely successful, in spite of the numerical inferiority of his troops (21,000 men), and having repeatedly defeated the Turks and captured their strongholds, he completed his triumph by plundering Samarcand. Laden with booty the Arabs returned to Merv.

In the spring Kuteïbe, greatly reinforced, set out against Bokhara. The fame of his exploits paralyzed the enemy to such a degree that they scarcely offered him any resistance, and Bokhara having submitted to Arab rule, Kuteïbe proceeded in 711 to Ferghana, occupied Eastern Turkestan (Kashgaria), received the homage of the province of Kansu, and returned in triumph to Merv. In the meanwhile the Arab Khalif Velid had died, and his successor, Suleïman bin Abdul Melik, began at once to intrigue against the successful general. Kuteïbe broke out in revolt against the Khalif, and endeavoured to get the army at Merv to side with him, but enemies among the troops frustrated this design, and inciting the soldiery to mutiny, murdered him in his own palace (714). Of the sway which the Khalifs of Damascus

and Bagdad exercised over modern Turkestan from their base at Merv, Vámbéry observes: "Throughout the whole period of the Arab occupation, Bokhara and the whole of Turkestan were degraded to the position of parts of the province of Khorassan. The proud capital on the Zerefshan, the wealthy Beïkend, and the industrious Ferghana, obeyed the commands issued from Mervi-Shah-Djihan, 'Merv the Queen of the World.' Although Bokhara and Samarcand had their emirs, these officers were entirely dependent upon the governor of Khorassan, and their sphere of action was extremely limited. The period of Arab rule, extending over nearly 150 years, forms one uninterrupted series of troubles, internal party discord, and insurrections, caused either by the governor of Khorassan himself or by the restless population of the province. Boundless cupidity, inspired partly by the desire for mere personal wealth, partly by the desire to fortify their position at the court of the Khalif by the expenditure of money, enabled the governors of Khorassan in no long time to accumulate immense sums. At the same time the distance of the province from the central government awoke in the breasts of its governors a wish to make themselves independent, while the warlike character of the population of Transoxania made them ready to enlist in the service of the rebels. It is consequently easy to explain why Khorassan from the first gave the Khalifs so much trouble, and why it was so difficult permanently to maintain the peace of that province."

The Khalif appointed as Kuteïbe's successor Yezid bin Mohallib (715), whose turbulent career was not marked by any event of importance. In 724 the

Turks in Tranxoxania rose against their Arab masters and occupied Samarcand. For some time they appeared to have success in their hands, but, in the end, Djendeb, with 43,000 levies marched from Merv, and defeated them under the walls of that city. Shortly after his return to Merv, Djendeb died, and the revolt broke out afresh against the person of his successor, Nasr bin Seyyar.

In the meanwhile a remarkable schism had been caused in Islam by the teachings of Mokanna, the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, so celebrated in Moore's limped verse. Mokanna, or Hashim bin Hekin, to call him by his proper name, was a native of Gheze, a place in the district of Merv. His father filled the post of general, and he himself early served in the same capacity under Ebn Muslim. On asserting his prophetic character he was seized and sent to Bagdad, but after the death of Ebn Muslim he returned to Merv (770), and, collecting his former adherents, proclaimed his doctrines with greater zeal than ever. From Merv he sent apostles throughout Central Asia. Hamid, the Governor of Khorassan, endeavoured to seize him, but he fled successfully to Turkestan, where his followers could soon be counted by thousands. The Khalif, alarmed, appointed Mu'az bin Muslim successor to the governor, and the new administrator collected in 777 a vast army in the desert between Merv and Bokhara, setting 3,000 armourers at work to prepare the weapons required. At first Mu'az was unsuccessful in his campaign against the adherents of Mokanna in Bokhara; but in the end the tide turned, the Veiled Prophet was driven to the fortress of Kesh, and there in 781, to

avoid surrender, destroyed himself by casting himself into a burning furnace.

The struggles between the Arabs of Khorassan and the Turks of Transoxania continued until 874, when the dynasty of the Samanides became thoroughly established on the Bokhara side of the Oxus; and after a conflict of 30 years Merv, from being the mistress, became the vassal of Bokhara. That its prosperity did not disappear with its ascendency is shown by the Arab traveller Ebn Haukal, who wrote in the 10th century the lines that head this chapter. Little afterwards is said about Merv until the beginning of the 11th century. By that time the Samanides had commenced to decay, and a rival had appeared in the shape of Seldjukides. At first the Seldjukides were unsuccessful in Bokhara, and, after a crushing defeat, they crossed the Oxus and settled for a time west of Merv (1030), on ground now occupied by the Tekke Turcomans. It is interesting to note that these Turkish Seldjukides were as great a pest to the province of Khorassan as the Tekkes are to-day, their irruptions reaching to Herat and the Hindoo Koosh and being uniformly crowned with success. Having, in course of time, transferred their seat of power to Balkh, they gradually began to decay, and by the 12th century had completely lost their ascendency.

In 1218 the Mongols, headed by Djengis Khan, overran Central Asia, and two years later a horde made its way across the Oxus to Merv. "On * the arrival of Toulai, fourth son of the Khan, before the

* Hutton's *Central Asia*.

flourishing city, the gates were opened to admit him. After his departure the people set up the standard of revolt. The respite was brief, the revenge unsparing. Retracing his steps, the Tartar chief again appeared before its walls, and in three weeks overpowered all opposition. The amount of treasure and valuable effects that became the prize of the conquerors is described as almost fabulous. The inhabitants being ordered to march out into the plain were massacred in large batches, but so vast was the population that it was not until the close of the fourth day that the last party went forth to their doom. The artisans, however, were separated from the rest of the multitude, and kept alive to work for their conquerors. The slain have been estimated at 100,000, with the remark that this was the fourth time that Merv had been desolated, and that on each occasion upwards of 50,000 persons had been cut to pieces. These numbers are obviously exaggerated, though an authority cited by Major Price declares that the number of those who perished at the hands of Toulai's barbarians, 'amounted to a thousand thousand and three hundred thousand and a fraction.'"

During the 200 years of Mongol supremacy in Central Asia, Merv languished in obscurity.* The Turks then taking the place of the Mongols, the ruined city became included in Tamerlane's possessions. In 1505 the Uzbeks of Turkestan annexed the city, and five years later the locality was the scene of a battle between the Uzbeks and the Persians, in which the latter, by treachery, succeeded in butchering

* Vámbéry's *History of Bokhara*.

Sherbani Mohammed and the greater part of his host. Merv thereupon became a Persian possession, and the point from which the Persian forces started in their wars with the Uzbeks. Their power, however, was not sufficiently great to extend over the surrounding region, and bands of Uzbek man-stealers found no difficulty in slipping past the garrison and ravaging the villages and towns of Khorassan.

In 1784 the Emir Maasum mounted the throne of Bokhara. His first bays as a Gazi had been gathered in his forays across the Oxus into Persia, in which he had frequently been disturbed by the Persians located at Merv. It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that in the very year of his accession he set out to clear away the only obstacle to Uzbek raids into Khorassan. "When the Emir appeared before the walls of the fortress its commander was one Baïram Ali Khan, a man who had for years held the robber hordes of the neighbourhood in check, but now defended himself in vain against the overwhelming numbers of the enemy. Another member of his tribe, the ambitious and unwearied Aga Mehemmed Khan, was engaged in the south of Persia, in a struggle for the crown of the house of Keyyan, against the valiant Lutf Ali Khan. Khorassan was divided amongst several princes, all seeking independence, and engaged in continual feuds with one another. Herat, the surest bulwark against Turanian invasion, was in the possession of Sharukh Meerza, a grandson of Nadir Shah, who, true to the alliance which his grandfather had contracted with Ebulfeïz, now saw with pleasure the ruin that was falling upon a Kurjar, one of the principal enemies of his house. Baïram Ali

Khan, thus abandoned to his fate, was at last overpowered in spite of his heroic exertions, in spite of the bravery of his warriors, even now celebrated in song, who were accompanied in their desperate sallies by armed women and girls. Baïram Ali Khan fell beneath the walls of Merv (1787), and after the Uzbeks had wasted the surrounding country, and in order to prevent the future cultivation of the country had even broke down the dam of the ancient irrigation works of Bend-i-Merv, their pious and God-fearing leader returned to Bokhara. This first invasion was only the beginning of a series of forays which Emir Maasum undertook one after another through several years of his reign."

After the fall of Baïram Ali Khan his son, Mehemmed Huseïn, with some difficulty maintained himself for a time, but he was at length defeated and Merv was entirely laid in ruins. "Its Turkish inhabitants were transferred by force to Bokhara, where they still bear the name of Mervi.* In the year 1790 the Sarik Turcomans, and after them, about the year 1834, the Tekke Turcomans, who lived before that to the westward, in Akhal, took possession of the ruins. In the place where once had flourished Persian science and Persian industry are now only to be heard, mingled with the rattle of their chains, the Persian lamentations of those unfortunate Iranians,

* In his *Travels* Vámbéry writes:—"The Mervi are the descendants of the 40,000 Persians transplanted from Merv to Bokhara by the Emir Maasum. The race sprang originally from the Turks of Azerbijan and Karabeg, whom Nadir Shah transferred from their ancient homes to Merv. Next to the Tadjiks the Mervi is the most cunning amongst the inhabitants of Bokhara, but he is far from being so cowardly as the former."

who, in heavy bondage under the tents of the Turcomans turn their longing eyes towards their near but lost country."*

In 1832 Alexander Burnes visited Merv, being the first Englishman to explore the place, for Wolff's cursory visit, unfruitful of knowledge to the world, does not deserve to rank as an exploration. A campaign had then just come to an end between the Sarik Turcomans and the Khan of Khiva, and in his journey from Bokhara to Merv the caravan to which Burnes was attached was compelled to make for the Khivan camp, which lay a few miles below Merv. Of this campaign Burnes writes:—"In the summer of 1832, the Khan marched his whole military force from Khiva to Merv, and levied contributions on the Tekke, the greatest of the Turcoman tribes. He fixed a custom-house both there and at Sarakhs, a town held by the Turcoman tribe of Salor, which is within three marches of Meshed, in Persia, and now levies duties on the caravans which pass both these places. This advance of the Khivan army is creditable to the military genius of the Khan. The distance from Khiva to Merv amounts to fifteen marches, and is almost destitute of water, which was procured by digging wells at every stage as he advanced. He commanded in person, and gave out that he had taken the field to resist the Persians, under Abbass Meerza, who threatened him from Meshed. He was accompanied by a vast herd of camels, bearing water and provisions for his troops. About 2,000 of these perished from thirst in the

* Vambery's *History of Bokhara*.

steppe. His father surpassed him in this achievement, since he entirely crossed this desert to Persia; he, however, lost the greater portion of his horses in the undertaking, and was compelled to leave his guns in the sand, where one of them still remains."

The Khan placed a garrison at Merv and returned to Khiva,* but had scarcely reached home when the Sarik rose in rebellion and put to the sword the governor and most of the troops. A new campaign was commenced with great rapidity, in which the Djemshidi, old enemies of the Sarik, also took part, and, led by their chief Mir Mehemmed, conquered the Sarik and reduced them to subjection. The Tekkes, however, (or, rather, a part of them) then living between Merv and Akhal at Kara Yap and Kabukli, refused to pay tribute to Khiva. The Khivan sovereign Medemin or Medemi, consequently attacked the Tekkes, and after three campaigns, during which many men and animals perished in the sandy desert, succeeded in overpowering a part of the insurgents, and left a garrison composed of Yomoods and Uzbeks, under two leaders, to keep them in check. The two leaders, however, quarrelled after a while, and the Yomood chief, returning to Khiva, was there hurled down, by the order of the offended Khan, from the top of a lofty tower. This act turned the Yomoods against the Khan, and led to their secretly allying themselves with the Tekkes.

In 1855 the Khan proceeded to Merv to settle once for all the Turcomans. "He speedily took Kara Yap,

* Vámbéry's various writings.

and was preparing to assail Sarakhs, when one day, while resting in his tent, pitched on a hill in the vicinity of Merv, in the very centre of his camp, he was surprised by some daring hostile horsemen, and in spite of Medemi's cry, 'Men Hazret em' (I am the Khan), his head was struck off, without any of his retinue having had time to hasten to his rescue. At the sight of the severed head, which the Turcomans sent as a present to the Shah of Persia, a panic seized his troops, who retired nevertheless in good order to Khiva."*

In 1861, the Shah of Persia despatched 25,000 troops against the Tekkes of Merv. An account of their defeat has already been related by Petroosevitch, in describing the rise of the Tekke Turcomans. The force consisted of 12,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry, and 33 guns. Against this Grodekoff affirms that only 3,000 Tekke horsemen were ranged, Colonel Baker, however, placing the number at 5,000. Arsky says that the Persians besieged Merv, and were surprised during a truce by a number of Tekkes entering the camp in the guise of women. Baker, on the other hand, states that the Persians not only besieged, but occupied Merv, and that, too, "with little difficulty"; after which, "lapsing into a state of utter listlessness," they allowed themselves to be surprised and routed by 5,000 Turcomans. An accurate account of the campaign yet remains to be written, and ought to have been taken in hand long ago by our Embassy at Teheran. Vám-

* Vambery's *Recent History of Khiva*. General Petroosevitch, in his account of the Tekkes, gives a slightly varied version of the Khan's death.

béry denounces in strong terms the incompetency of the Persian general. "He looked upon the Turcomans at Merv with the same contempt with which Varus had contemplated the Cherusci in the woods of the Teutones, but the Persian was too cowardly to face the death of the Roman general. Neither was his sovereign an Augustus. He exclaimed it is true, 'Redde mihi meas legiones,' but he nevertheless allowed himself to be appeased by a payment of 24,000 ducats; and the base coward, even at the present day, fills a high post in Persia."

Since 1861 Persia has made no further effort by force of arms to impose her rule upon the Merv Tekkes, and has even refused to take them under her protection. The prediction may now be safely made that the oasis is lost for ever to the Shahs. The next phase in its history will be its occupation by Russia, when the secrets of the ruined city will be laid bare to the eyes of a curious world. Of the recent Russian operations against the Tekkes, it may be said that they have concerned only the clans occupying Akhal, and, as such, do not properly belong to an historical account of Merv.

CHAPTER XV.

MODERN MERV AND ITS STRATEGICAL IMPORTANCE.

Commercial position of the oasis.—A description of it.—The soil and river.—Wonderful fertility.—Revenue derived from it by the Khivans.—The Castle of Merv.—The remains of the ancient cities.—The aspect and extent of the ruins.—Mounds above the bones of Turcoman warriors.—A description of the Moorgab or Merv Daria.—The destruction of the dam by Shah Murad.—The climate of Merv.—General Petroosevitch's account of the Merv of to-day.—Peculiar sand-fogs.—Bad harvests.—Camels killed by flies.—Kostenko's military description of Merv.—Its fortresses and cannon.—Military power of the Tekke Turcomans.—Various opinions as to the importance of Merv.—Grodekoff's assertion that Merv is not the key of Herat.—Baker's assertion that it is.—McGregor's view of the matter.—Iskander Khan's opinion of Merv and a Russian advance thence to Herat.—The necessity of taking Merv out of the region of uncertainty.—Threat of the Tekkes to migrate to Afghanistan.—*Resumé* of the negotiations of England and Russia regarding Merv.—The Czar gives a promise to Lord Dufferin not to occupy Merv.—Value of the promise.

"How do you expect to prevent Russia from taking Herat when once she is at Merv? The Moorgab river runs from Afghanistan to Merv. You know well that, in this country, where there is water, troops can move. The banks of the Moorgab are fertile. How near to Herat along this river do you intend to let Russia advance and settle?"—ALAYAR KHAN to COLONEL BAKER.

"The oasis * of Merv is situated about 100 miles north of the Kuren Dagh. It is nearly half-way between the cities of Meshed and Bokhara. The natives of Central Asia commonly speak of it as being 60 farsangs, or 240 miles distant from any well-inhabited district, and particularly from 5 principal cities, viz. Khiva, Bokhara, Herat, and Meshed, from each of which places the road to it lies through a perfect desert; the distances may be erroneously equalized by those who tell this, for the sake of point; but it is a fact, that so much or nearly so much of the desert is spread around Merv, once the seat of splendour, luxury, and power. Sarakhs, indeed, intervenes between it and Meshed, but the road makes a considerable bend to go there, and Sarakhs itself is in the desert."

"Merv † comprises an oasis 90 miles in circumference; and through this runs the river Moorgab, which rises in the mountains immediately north of Herat." "The plain ‡ has perhaps an area of 60 miles by 40, or 2,400 square miles, running on every side into the desert." Burnes, in one of his chapters, asks to be excused for "dwelling on the beauties of Merv, since we impart an interest to the dreary solitudes of Turkmenia by deserting the once beautiful oasis." Unfortunately, his description is chiefly historical, and one only gathers from chance allusions during his journey through the oasis the luxuriance of vegetation there in the summer. Otherwise, while observing that the entire waters of the Moorgab are

* Fraser.
† Baker.
‡ Burnes and Abbott: the latter partly copies from Burnes.

dispersed over the sandy plain for purposes of irrigation, "which profusion renders the soil productive," he observes that the ground, nevertheless, has not "the strength to bear any but the poorer kinds of grain." * Abbott traversed the oasis in the depth of winter, and describes its aspect then as being "more dreary than that of the desert itself; for not a leaf is seen throughout its extent, and the soil—of the finest sand—is too unstable to bear even a weed or a blade of grass. Nevertheless, the considerable body of water poured down by the Moorgab, and entirely consumed in irrigation, gives fertility to the fields, and the poorer kinds of grain, such as juwaree and barley, are produced in great abundance. The melon, also, is particularly fine, and ere the ancient city was deserted, grapes and other fruits were not unknown." It should be remembered that both Burnes and Abbott visited the place just after the ravages effected by the Khivan army, and when the oasis was still suffering from the destruction of the dam and the deportation of its inhabitants to Bokhara by the Emir Murad. The Tekkes, then, had not occupied the oasis. In 1873, Colonel Baker gathered from inquiry on the Khorassan frontier, that Merv was "remarkable for its fine climate and extraordinary fertility. The soil yields no less than three crops a year, and in its palmy days it maintained a population of a million." In Burnes' time the population was 60,000, chiefly cultivators. The revenue derived

* Writers wishing to quote this sentence as a proof of the worthlessness of Merv are warned off. Burnes, as will be seen directly, says elsewhere "everything grows in rich luxuriance at Merv."

by the Khivans from land and other taxes was 210,000 rupees or £21,000 sterling. A very considerable trade passed through it. Abbott, seven years later, found "the government of Merv to be one of the most considerable offices of the State. Its seat is a small mud castle upon the western bank of the Moorgab, at the point of the dispersion of the waters of that river, through the five principal canals. A few miserable huts form a bazaar, resorted to from very distant parts, and the most considerable mart in a circuit of several hundred miles."

The rest of our knowledge of Merv is derived chiefly from allusions.* Thus, Abbott speaks about entering "the mud castle of Merv," and finding "a black tent pitched within the enclosure"; and, elsewhere—"At noon I mounted my horse and rode over to the Khalifa's abode. I had a rare specimen of this abominable plain, passing through an atmosphere of dust that almost stifled me. My road lay through the bazaar of low huts, which constitutes the present city of Merv. I issued from thence into the plain of deep fine sand, showing not in the whole of its wide extent of some 3,000 miles a blade of any herb, but raked up by the lightest wind, until the sky is blotted out by the dust. I found the Khalifa's black tent pitched on the banks of a sluice from the main canal. . . . I was glad to quit the wretched, though much

* It should be remembered that Merv escaped being regarded as a place of imperial importance in the period of 1880-40, not because Burnes and Abbott and others thought little of its strategical value, but owing to the absence then of any probability of its being occupied by Russia.

vaunted plain, and enter the desert, which is a paradise in comparison."* Burnes saw nothing of the "castle," not approaching sufficiently near the place. "Several members of the caravan, on their approach to the Moorgab, declared that they had a view of the elevated mound of its ruined castle. I sought in vain; but the other spectators were looking for their native city, and wished, perhaps, to persuade themselves that they beheld it."

"As in most † Persian districts highly blessed by nature, the remains of several towns of several eras may still be traced at Merv. The ruins of four large towns are distinctly visible at the present day. It has ever been a weakness with Persian conquerors to destroy flourishing towns, and to build new ones in close proximity to their sites. But although the cities have been destroyed (and, as the Turcomans occupy tents, no attempt has been made to rebuild them), the vast watercourses created in different ages, much dilapidated though they are, still remain."

Abbott is, I believe, the only European who has cast attentive eyes on the ruins. He says:—"I perceived upon the eastern horizon, the ruins of the ancient Merv, of which a mosque and several forts form the principal features. The city is said to have been smaller than Herat, *i.e.* less than four miles in

* A traveller visiting London during a November fog might carry away just as bad an impression of England, as Abbott did of Merv from a December ride through the oasis, when the snow lay thick on the ground in some places, and a bitter wind stirred up the sand in others.

† Baker.

circuit. From this distance I might have estimated it at eight times the dimensions. The fact seems to be, that several sites have in turn been occupied and abandoned, retaining each some vestige of its former fortifications; and these lying in a continuous line, give an impression of vastness to the deserted site. I regarded it with much interest, and regretted the haste which prevented me from visiting it. On the horizon around us were many Tepés, or artificial mounds, of considerable elevation. These are supposed to have been forts." Vámbéry, however, explains the erection of some of these Tepés otherwise. "When a chief of distinction, one who has really well earned the title of Bator (valiant), perishes, it is the practice to throw up over his grave a Joszka (large mound); to this every good Turcoman is bound to contribute at least seven shovelfuls of earth, so that these elevations often have a circumference of 60 feet, and a height of from 20 to 30 feet. In the great plains these mounds are very conspicuous objects; the Turcoman knows them all, and calls them by their names,—that is to say, by the names of those that rest below."

The district of Merv is situated alongside the Moorgab, which Ferrier describes as "a small but rather rapid river, and full of fish; amongst them are found excellent barbel, the Epardus or Margus of the Greeks. It waters a fertile valley." "The upper part of the valley* bears the name of Bala Moorgab (Upper Moorgab); it extends from the frontiers of the lofty mountainous chain of the Hazares as far as Marchah

* Vámbéry.

(snake well), where dwell the Salor Turcomans; it is said of old to have been a possession of the Djemshidi, and that they were for a time dispossessed, but afterwards returned. To the south-west of the fortress the valley becomes so narrow, that it merits rather the name of a defile. Through the midst the Moorgab rolls foaming away with the noise of thunder,—it is not until it has passed Pendjdeh, when the river becomes deeper and more sedate, that the valley spreads itself out and acquires a breadth of one or two miles. When Merv existed, there must have been here, too, a tolerable amount of civilization; but at the present day Turcomans house themselves there, and upon their steps follow everywhere ruin and desolation."

Burnes crossed the Moorgab about 16 miles below Merv. "We found it about 80 yards wide and five feet deep, running within steep clayey banks, at the rate of five miles an hour. We crossed by an indifferent ford, over a clay bottom with many holes. There was no village; but the place is called Uleesha. This river rises in the mountains of Huzara, and was long believed to fall into the Oxus or Caspian. Both opinions are erroneous, since it forms a lake, or loses itself in one, about 50 miles" (Colonel Baker, 100 miles) "N.W. of Merv. This river was formerly dammed above that town, which turned the principal part of its waters to Merv, and raised that city to the state of richness and opulence which it once enjoyed. The dam was thrown down at the end of the last century by Shah Murad, a king of Bokhara, and the river now only irrigates the country in its immediate vicinity, where it is

covered with the tenements, or *obas*, of the Turcomans; for there are no fixed villages. These people cultivate by irrigation, and everything grows in rich luxuriance.

"Above Merv the country is called Maroochak, and said to be unhealthy: there is a proverb, at least, which runs thus:—'Before God gets intelligence, the water of Maroochak has killed the man. (Ta khooda khubur shoodun ab i Maroochak adum ra mee kooshud). This river is the Epardus of Arrian, a word which, I observe in one author, is said to mean *irrigator*,—nor is it here misapplied. The historian would even appear to have been acquainted with its course; for we are told that the 'Epardus hides its stream in the sand, as did many other great rivers.'"

Abbott describes the Moorgab as being "a deep and rapid river, with a breadth at Youletan of 50 yards. After receiving the waters of the Khoosk rivulet at Pendjdeh it flows through a clay valley, bounded on either side by sandy heights, and gradually opening into the plain of Merv. The waters are entirely consumed in irrigation."

Of the climate of Merv Abbott observes: "In the region between the Aral and Caspian the snow lies during winter to the depth of four or five feet, and the thermometer sinks to 40° of Reaumur. Even at Khiva, the river Oxus is hard frozen during four months, although the latitude corresponds with that of Rome; and snow lies for several months, melting in the sun's rays, but so hard congealed in the shade, as never to be compressible into masses. Yet in summer, the heat at Khiva is almost insuf-

ferable; linen clothes can scarcely be borne; and it is impossible to sleep beneath the roof. People exposed to the sun die in consequence. These great extremes terminate about midway between Merv and Khiva. At Merv, indeed, the heat of summer is sufficiently oppressive, as every ray of the sun is multiplied by the sands of the surrounding deserts; but in winter, although snow falls, it is immediately melted by the heat of the soil. Yet Merv, although 5° farther south than Khiva, has a higher elevation above the sea's level, as the course of its river attests."

In his account of the Tekke Turcomans, General Petroosevitch remarks that "what Burnes wrote of Merv still holds good to-day. A few changes have taken place. There are, for instance, many gardens there, and it is said that the owners of such do not fall short of a thousand. All the same, Merv cannot be regarded as such a favourable locality as the traveller tries to make out. Its position amidst sandy wastes, in the midst of the immense continent of Asia, renders its climate in the summer insupportable. The slightest wind lifts up whole masses of fine sand and dust, which fill the air and give it a yellow appearance. The daily vibration of the air, extremely violent where there is a great difference between the temperature of the day and night, produces an upward tendency on the part of the particles of dust, rendering objects at a short distance quite obscure. Even for Turcomans born in the desert Merv has never apparently possessed much charm, since they have always sought opportunities for migrating 140 miles to the south,

to Sarakhs, close to the shadow of the Elburz and Paropamisus ridges.

"Recently affairs at Merv have been in a very bad way: not on account of scarcity of land and water, but by reason of the diminution of the Tekke flocks and herds. An internal disease among their sheep has carried off whole flocks at the time, and a species of fly, first appearing in 1878, has been the cause of death of many camels. As is well known, the camel is a very tender animal. It cannot stand severe cold. Of flies it has an intense horror, running violently about the desert to escape them, and falling at last exhausted. Years ago the Merv Tekkes possessed vast numbers of sheep, and single individuals owned hundreds of camels. This wealth has almost completely disappeared.

"At Merv the land is very productive, and the Tekkes usually grow sufficient corn to support themselves without extraneous aid. Of late years there has been a succession of bad harvests, owing to a scarcity of water produced by an insufficiency of snow in the Paropamisus range, where the Moorgab takes its rise. In 1872 there was quite a famine at Merv. A Tekke *batman* (41 lbs.) of wheat rose in price to 20 *Tenghé* (10*s*.) In 1877 there was another failure of the harvest, and corn was sold for 8 *Tenghé*. Finally, in 1878, the superabundance of water in the Moorgab carried away the dam, and by drying up some of the canals, nearly led to a failure of the crops. The price of corn rose to 5 *Tenghé*, but irrigation being restored, it fell to its usual price—1½ *Tenghé* the *batman*."

Colonel Kostenko,* of General Kaufmann's Intelligence Department, thus describes Merv in his military work on Turkestan published in 1880:—"At Khan-Kitchken, 11 miles from Merv, where the Khivan and Oxus roads cross the Moorgab, the late Tekke elder Kooshoot Khan constructed a stronghold to hold 40,000 tents. It consists of a sandy earthwork, 33 paces broad and 8 or 10 yards high. In 1877 Kooshoot had the intention of facing this rampart inside and out with a clay brick wall. Inside is a bazaar.

"The fortress of Merv is about 2 miles long and one broad. The walls are 12 paces thick. No structures exist inside the place, nor yet any people. The fortress is built as a refuge for the people on the appearance of the enemy.

"The locality surrounding the fortress is perfectly level and flat. Along the south and western faces flows the Moorgab, here 50 paces wide. At places it is 25 feet deep, but at others camels and even horses can ford it. In Merv are 32 guns, held by the elders, each having two or three apiece. Thirty of these were taken from the Persians and two from the Khivans. The Tekkes make their own powder: their bullets they obtain from the Persians and Afghans.

"In the event of an enemy appearing, the Tekke, Salor, and Sarik Turcomans can put 50,000 horsemen in the field."

Burnes considered Merv "so important, connecting as it does Bokhara, Khiva, and Afghanistan, that it will never be long abandoned, and might, with judicious care, rapidly rise from its dust into wealth and

* Now Chief of General Kaufmann's staff in Kuldja.

consequence." Abbott supported this view, "Merv being the granary of a large portion of the hill country of Herat, and the channel of commerce between that city and Khiva, and between Bokhara, Herat, and Meshed." In later times Captain Terentieff declared it to be a "splendid base for operations against Hindostan." Captain Burnaby believed it would make a "magnificent étape." He lays it down that Russia ought to be given to understand, that any advance in the direction of Merv would be looked upon by England as a *casus belli*. During his stay at Khiva he conversed upon the matter with the commander of the Russian fort of Petro-Alexandrovsk, "and, with reference to Merv, Colonel Ivanoff remarked that he could take it at any time, provided his Government would allow him to do so, whilst he said that the fortress he would build there would be a great deal stronger than the one at Petro-Alexandrovsk. Another officer of the Petro-Alexandrovsk garrison (4,000 troops) said: 'We should have no difficulty whatever in taking Merv. People talk of the difficulty of getting there; why, our Cossacks could be at Merv in a week if the Government would only allow us.'"

Colonel Baker observes that "Merv, with its water communication nearly complete to Herat, lies only 240 miles from that place, to which it is the key. There can be no doubt that Merv is the natural outwork of Herat, with the advantage of a water-supply all the way between the two cities. Strategically, the Russian occupation of Merv would be, so to say, the forming of a lodgment on the glacis of Herat. It would place Herat completely at her mercy."

Colonel Grodekoff,* on the other hand, denies that Merv is the key of Herat. "The road from Bala Moorgab across the Paropamisus to Herat is clogged with obstacles. Bala Moorgab is situated on the river Moorgab—the stream flowing through, and fructifying the oasis of Merv,—consequently I rode along the road from Merv to Herat. *To conduct an expeditionary force of any strength along that route would be an impossibility.* † On this account, I venture to contest the opinion of Rawlinson and other authorities on Central Asia, and make the assertion that *Merv is not the key of Herat.* A key serves to open and give admittance. In opening Merv; *i.e.* in occupying it, we should not obtain admittance to Herat. Merv possesses another significance, but in nowise does it concern Herat."

Grodekoff, however, says nothing about other roads from Merv to Herat. Major Abbott rode the whole distance from Herat to Merv, and the road would not appear, from his description, to present any insuperable obstacles to an invader. A condensed account of Abbott's 11 days' ride may be found in the Appendix, and the reader can consequently judge on this point for himself. It need simply be said, in regard to Grodekoff's assertions, that the convoy escorting him from Bala Moorgab to Herat was very reluctant to let him see the country, and very likely, in order to impress him with the difficulty of penetrating to the "Key of India," led him by the worst possible road thither. It is a matter of fact that Yakoob Beg more than once tricked Russian travellers in this fashion, when they forced them-

* Now Chief of General Skobeleff's staff in Akhal.
† Italics Grodekoff's.

selves, on "scientific missions," upon his hospitality in Kashgaria; and it would not be surprising, therefore, if Grodekoff suffered from similar Asiatic astuteness. The passage of the Paropamisus range cannot be much worse for an army than the Balkans in Turkey, or the snow-clad peaks of the frosty Caucasus, yet both have been succesfully traversed in the face of an enemy. Be it remembered, too, that mountains, if they cannot be crossed, can invariably be turned by a skilful general.

Against Grodekoff's opinion may be well matched Colonel C. M. McGregor's. He observes:—"A Russian authority, M. Tchichacheff, declares that Herat would be in no danger, even if the Russians were in possession of Merv, because the road between these places lies over an impracticable range of mountains. I must, however, take leave to deny this statement in the most decided manner. I have myself been to the Herat valley, and have followed a considerable part of one of the roads to Merv, and I have made the most careful inquiries from people on the spot, who were in the constant habit of riding over the rest of the distance. Yet, there is so little impression of difficulty in my mind, that I would undertake to drive a mail coach from Merv to Herat by this road.

"With regard to the other road, by the Moorgab, we have fortunately the evidence of two British officers, Lieutenants Abbott and Shakespeare, and in their accounts, which are accessible to anyone, there is no word of difficulty anywhere. The distance being 260 miles, the fact therefore is that this place, which the *Times* says is of no im-

portance, is easily accessible from Herat—that is, for guns, cavalry, and infantry. How soon 5,000 men could be transferred from one place to the other, I leave my readers to work out for themselves, all I contend being, that do so would be a perfectly feasible, nay an easy, military operation."

The opinion of an Afghan prince, Iskander Ahmed Khan Baruzkei, merits record here:—"Merv, at this time, is only a refuge for marauders; but let Russia possess it, and it will become a place of notoriety, and one of the richest in the world, both for its fertility and well-known capacity for the maintenance of a corps of soldiers at little cost: example, five or six melons only will constitute a camel-load. Hence the animals, which rove at large, become fat and sleek, without care of the owner, and vegetation everywhere is equally luxuriant. In short, if Merv pass into the hands of Russia it will regain its former splendour. But the question will not rest here, that Russia will take Merv merely, and hold it quietly, but she will take the Moorgab river also, and march up to it, and thus possess all the country. For example, when she leaves Merv, the first country worthy of note with which she will come in contact on the same river is Youletan, with its ruined fort, and which was the country of the Salor Turcomans for some years after their defeat by the Persians, and who, through the invasion of the Tekke Turcomans, were compelled to desert, and for these fifteen years they have come under the jurisdiction of Herat, in the fort of Marooghagh, and cultivate its whole territory. The next country Russia will seize is Pendjdeh, on the

same river, where are Sarik Turcomans dwelling, which place is nearly equal in fertility to Merv. That country was frequently dependent upon Herat; for example, the Shah Kamran, the last sovereign of Sadozai, had always a commission there, and my father, at the request of the Sarik Turcomans, sent twice a commissioner amongst them to collect the taxes. One stage further on, and Russia will come to the fort of Marooghagh, and from thence within one stage to the fort of Moorgab, which is situated on the high road betwixt Herat and Maimene, and further on still, to Afghan Turkestan. When Russia shall have reached here, she will divide or cut off Herat from Afghan Turkestan, and thus extend her power from one side to Maimene, and the other side to Herat Badgheese as far as the Kooshk, which is separated from Herat Bason by the high mountains of Baba. The countries I have named are nearly equally fertile, and also favourable to any number of armies marching through."

Baillie Fraser asserts that Merv is "not politically necessary or geographically part of Persia; it should belong rather to Afghanistan." Colonel Valentine Baker thinks it "most important that Merv should be taken out of the region of uncertainty. To hand it over to Persia, or to urge Persia to re-occupy it, would be to place it always at the mercy of Russia, and to alienate the Tekke Turcomans. It would be much more expedient to endeavour to attach it and the Tekke Turcomans as a semi-independent state to Afghanistan. From my knowledge of the Tekkes, I am convinced that this might be carried into effect. The Tekkes are most anxious to become a

dependency of England. They look upon the Ameer as the vassal of England, and would gladly hail any position which would prevent them from falling a prey to Russia—an event which they consider imminent."

Colonel C. M. McGregor sides with Colonel Baker: "Merv is separated from the culturable land belonging to Persia, by a desert 100 miles in breadth, but the lands of the Merv Tekkes are continuous with, and inseparable from, those of the Afghans. Their subjugation by the Persians would be difficult, because they would resist strongly, and they hate them as Sheeahs most bitterly, but their absorption into the territory of their Sunni neighbours, the Afghans, to whom they have already offered allegiance, would be easy and natural. It is to be expected that a firm, yet kindly English officer, would gradually wean them from their lawless habits; but if not, they could be far more easily and effectually coerced from Herat than from Meshed."

When McGregor was travelling along the Turcoman border, he was assured by Berdi Murad Bey (the gallant defender of Dengeel Tepé in 1879), that "the Tekkes were determined to fight to the last; when the Russians came, and when they could not fight any longer, they would all emigrate to Afghanistan, probably higher up the Moorgab. I was rather struck with this, and had a number of questions put to him, to find out whether they were really disposed to do so; and from his answers I should say he was speaking the truth. They are convinced that the Russians mean to have Merv before long,

and, notwithstanding their boastings, are equally sure that they cannot really hope to withstand them; therefore this forethought is but natural."

It will be useful to notice here the negotiations between England and Russia of late years regarding Merv. The first part is abridged from Sutherland Edwards' excellent *Russians at Home and Abroad* (new edition, 1879), and the rest from the Blue Book No. 1, 1880, on affairs in Central Asia.

"No mention of Merv in connection with Russia is to be found in any book or article published prior to the year 1874. Merv derived a great part of its present importance from the cruel attack made on the Yomood Turcomans after the fall of Khiva. General Krijanovsky, who deprecated this attack, foretold that the Russians would find it necessary to make expeditions against the Turcomans for many years, and that they would in the end find themselves obliged to take Merv, 'which would undoubtedly lead to complications with England.' On Sep. 21, 1870, Mr. Stremooukoff, of the Russian Foreign Office, remarked to Sir Andrew Buchanan, in discussing the question of the Afghan frontier, that great care would be required in tracing a line from Khoja Sala, on the Oxus, to the south, as Merv and the country of the Turcomans were becoming 'commercially important.' Merv, not belonging to Afghanistan, was naturally not included within the Afghan frontier. But it seems remarkable, if so much was to be said about it afterwards, that not a word was uttered on the subject—at least, not by England—when the Afghan frontier was being traced.

Merv is nearly on the same parallel as Khoja Sala, the most western point of Afghan territory on the Oxus; so that if 'care had not been taken,' as Mr. Stremooukoff suggested, in drawing the line—if, for example, it had been drawn due west—Russia, by excluding herself from all interference in the affairs of Afghanistan, would have been definitely shut out from Merv. She expressly stipulated that this should not be the case, having previously given the English Government to understand, in the same order of ideas, that if the Ameer of Afghanistan claimed to exercise sovereignty over the Tekke Turcomans, his pretensions could not be recognised. In insisting on the fact that the Afghans had nothing to do with Merv, nor the Turcomans of Merv with Afghanistan, the Russian Government gave no hint of any intention to occupy the place on their own account. But Prince Gortschakoff has declared so often and so pointedly that Afghanistan would be considered as 'entirely beyond the sphere in which Russia might be called upon to exercise her influence,' that it is difficult not to see in the constant reiteration of this phrase a meaning not contained in the phrase itself. It is certain, however, that in drawing the Afghan boundary some fifty miles south of Merv, the English Government did not intend to place Merv at the disposition of Russia; while it is by no means certain that in conceding to England the frontier she demanded on behalf of the Ameer of Afghanistan, Russia did not mean to imply that she could not recognise England's right to interfere with the action of Russia in any part of Central Asia outside Afghanistan."

Recent negotiations between England and Russia regarding Merv have been published up to the end of 1879. On the 9th of July, Lord Salisbury addressed the following despatch to the Earl of Dufferin, respecting a conversation he had held with Schouvaloff in regard to Lazareff's expedition:—"My Lord, I asked the Russian Ambassador to-day, whether there was any truth in the reports which had been extensively circulated, that an expedition was starting from the shores of the Caspian Sea with the intention of marching upon Merv. In reply, his Excellency referred to assurances which he had previously given to me, that no such intention was entertained by the Russian Government. He had informed his Government, he said, of my intimation that Her Majesty's Government could not look without dissatisfaction upon any operations which should have the effect of either threatening Merv or encroaching upon Persian territory, and he assured me that no design involving either result was entertained by the Imperial Government. The present expedition, he stated, was directed against the Tekké Turcomans, and, if successful, probably would have for its result the construction of a chain of posts uniting Krasnovodsk and Tchikishlar by a curved line, of which the extreme point would not be nearer than 250 kilom. to Merv. Count Schouvaloff added that he entirely disbelieved in the existence among any section of Russian statesmen of a wish to advance to Merv; and he remarked, that even if such a design as that of occupying Herat as a stepping-stone to India were conceivable, Merv did not lie upon the nearest road between

the Caspian and Herat.* I am, &c. (Signed) SALISBURY."

On the 16th of July the Earl of Dufferin wrote to the Marquis of Salisbury: "My Lord, I have the honour to state that on Wednesday, the 9th instant, I took occasion, during the course of a conversation with M. de Giers, to refer casually to the operations of the Russian army against the Tekkés, to the eastward of the Caspian Sea, as well as to the reports current of a contemplated advance upon Merv by General Lazareff. M. de Giers assured me, in reply, in the most positive manner, that there was no intention on the part of the Russian Government to go to Merv, that their object was simply to put an end to the depredations of the Turcoman tribes in the neighbourhood of the Caspian; and he added of his own accord, that in the conduct of these operations the strictest orders had been given to respect the Persian territory. I asked M. de Giers whether he supposed the Russian and the English Governments were agreed as to the exact limits of the Persian frontier; M. de Giers said he imagined they were, though in the interior of the country there was, of course, a good deal of *terra incognita*. I have also had a conversation with Baron Jomini on the same subject. Baron Jomini says that the Russian advance is intended to stop at a point some 200 versts upon this side of Merv. This spot forms the easternmost apex of a triangle, within which are contained the various oases, where the Tekke Turcomans keep

* True. Merv and Akhal do not lie on the nearest road to Herat; but they *dominate* the nearest road, *i.e.* the route *viâ* Astrabad, Budjnurd, and Meshed.—C. M.

their women and cattle. Two columns, one from the Caspian Sea and the other from the North, will be directed upon this triangle. Having thus become masters of these oases, a permanent stop will be put to the depredations of the tribes, and any further efforts in that direction on the part of the Russian armies will be unnecessary; 'but,' added Baron Jomini, 'although we don't intend to go to Merv, or to do anything which may be interpreted as a menace to England, you must not deceive yourself, for the result of our present proceedings will be to furnish us with a base of operations against England, hereafter, should the British Government by the occupation of Herat threaten our present position in Central Asia.' I replied that I did not imagine there was any question at present of the occupation of Herat by a British garrison, and that it seemed to me it would be very easy for England and Russia to arrive at an understanding which would obviate for the future those irritating suspicions which naturally at present attached to the reported movements of the Russian troops to the eastward of the Caspian Sea, and which undoubtedly reacted with a pernicious effect upon the intercourse of the two Governments, in relation even to European affairs."

On the 30th he wrote again :—"In continuation of my previous despatch of the 16th instant, I have the honour to state that M. de Giers has informed me that His Majesty has expressly approved the assurances he had given me as to the non-advance of the Russian troops on Merv. I then mentioned to M. de Giers the observations which had fallen from Baron Jomini in reference to this subject.

M. de Giers hastened to reply that the contemplated operations would not extend near so far eastward as the Baron had intimated."

On the 19th of August he wrote:—"My Lord, I have the honour to inform you that yesterday, in conversation with His Majesty, he was pleased to assure me that there was no intention of the Russian troops advancing on Merv."

This being accepted by England literally—too literally, indeed, by the Liberal press—Russia hastened to modify the impression, and Lord Dufferin was compelled to write to Lord Salisbury on the 26th of August the subjoined despatch:—"My Lord, I have the honour to inform your Lordship that M. de Giers referred yesterday to the terms in which Mr. Stanhope communicated to the House of Commons the assurances conveyed to Her Majesty's Government, as to the Emperor having no intention of directing the military expedition now being organised by General Lazareff on the other side of the Caspian against Merv. M. de Giers intimated that he considered that Mr. Stanhope's language went too far; that although he had told me that an advance upon Merv was not contemplated by the Russian Government, and formed no part of their existing programme, he did not mean to imply that in different circumstances, and in view of unforeseen contingencies, the occupation of Merv might not become necessary; that in fact, the Russian Government had never intended by a solemn pledge, given for all time, to preclude themselves from ever going to Merv. I replied that I hoped the observations he had now made to me were not intended to

impair the *bonâ-fide* character of his previous assurances on the subject, that His Majesty himself had deigned to inform me that there was no question of a Russian advance upon Merv, that I had transmitted that assurance to your Lordship, and that in spite of what had just fallen from him I presumed that he had not been instructed to modify it. M. de Giers answered that he did not desire his remarks to be so interpreted, and that I might rest satisfied that Merv was in no sense the object of General Lazareff's expedition."

It is well to contrast these diplomatic assurances at St. Petersburg with the language expressed by the commander of the Turcoman expedition at Baku. "General Lazareff made no secret of the object of the expedition. 'I have sent to the Tekkes,' he said to Mr. O'Donovan, before crossing the Caspian to advance up the Atrek, 'to tell them that I mean to annex their country, and have warned them that if they intend to fight they had better get ready at once. I mean to subjugate and annex the country. If circumstances compel me to go to Merv, to Merv I shall go.' Nothing could be more explicit and plainer than this."*

* *The Disastrous Russian Campaign against the Akhal Tekke Turcomans.*

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PERSO-TURCOMAN FRONTIER.

Geographical account of Khorassan.—The border provinces of Deregez, Kuchan, and Budjnurd.—The eastern frontier and the Heri Rood.—The district of 440 ruined villages.—Azerbijan in danger.—The thin edge of a Russian wedge between Herat and Meshed.—Tekkes in Kelat.—Kurdish colonies.—Karri Kala and Nookhoor: Persia's claim to both contested.—Captain Napier's visit to Karri Kala.—The settlements of the Akhal Tekkes.—The magnificent region of the Goklan Turcomans, now practically a Russian possession.—Petroosevitch's peep at Askabat.—The rise and fall of the Tedjend.—The region between Akhal and Merv.—Colonization of the Tedjend district.—Fine climate and soil of the border provinces.—The granary of Khorassan.—An account of the inhabitants.—Their numbers.—Petroosevitch's denial of Rawlinson's views respecting the impossibility of invading Merv from Akhal.—Sarakhs proved to be of no value.—A direct march from Askabat to Merv superior to an advance *viâ* Sarakhs.—The conquest of Merv not so difficult as the conquest of Khiva.—Persia a Power of no account.—The Shah powerless to prevent an occupation of Merv.—English agents on the Turcoman border.

"I have no hesitation in saying that, among the masses on the North Persian frontier, Russian influence is predominant to-day."—SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT of the *Daily News*, Kuchan, September 1880.

"The Turcomans of Merv said to Wolff—'We Turcomans do not mind who governs us if we only get khalats (robes of honour) and tillahs (ducats).'"—WOLFF.

"KHORASSAN* constitutes the north-east part of Persia. It is bounded on the west by the provinces of Shahrood and Astrabad; on the south by the great desert lying to the north of Kerman and Yezd; on the east by Afghanistan and the Heri Rood; and on the north by the Akhal Tekke oasis. Enclosed within the above borders are the following provinces and districts, commencing from the south:—Seistan, Khaf, Tun, Tebbes, Toorbet-i-Sheikh-i-Djam, Toorbet-i-Hideri, and Toorshiz, Tavroon, Sebzewar, Nishapoor, Kelat, Deregez, Kuchan, and Budjnurd.

"During my journey in 1878 the southern provinces lay outside my line of route: hence I shall exclude them from my notice. With the northern provinces I succeeded in making myself tolerably familiar, and in particular with the border provinces of Budjnurd, Kuchan, Deregez, Kelat, and the east frontier of Khorassan, stretching along the river Heri Rood, from the Persian fort of Sarakhs to the village of Koosan, on the Afghan frontier.

"Starting from the east with Kelat, we find the northern provinces of Khorassan composed in succession of Deregez, Kuchan, and Budjnurd; after which, to the Caspian Sea, stretches the province of Astrabad. The province of Kelat forms the north-east angle of Persia, but 45 miles east of it, and almost parallel, lies the Persian fortress of Sarakhs, on the

* This chapter is a translation, condensed in places, of General Petroosevitch's *North-East Provinces of Khorassan.*

left bank of the Heri Rood. Between the fortress of Sarakhs and the province of Kelat there are no settlements. Outside Kelat a number stretch obliquely to the south-east. Thus Sarakhs, standing in the same north-east angle of Khorassan, thrusts itself far in front of any other settlement, and is cut off from those at its rear by the Kuh-i-Moozderan ridge; which, commencing at Kelat, and extending in a south-easterly direction, ceases at the Heri Rood; thence pushing its branches further to the south, to the mouth of the river Djam, a stream that takes its rise among the western spurs of the Kuh-i-Moozderan ridge.

"The whole of the above-mentioned provinces lie among mountains, constituting an extension of the Elburz range. This range skirts the Caspian as far as Astrabad, and thence takes an easterly direction, with an inclination towards the north. For a considerable distance the ramification gradually decreases in height, and then again increases, dispersing at length in several branches, which combine further on into one knot at Mount Khezar Mesdjid, situated at the angle formed by the provinces of Kuchan, Deregez, and Kelat. From here extend many mountains towards the north and east; the former joining the Kopet Dagh,* which range gives rise to the affluents of the Atrek—the Sumbar and Tchandeer—and, from the spot where it forms a junction with the mountain network, extending to the north from Khezar Mesdjid, escape all the northern tributaries of the Atrek river. The eastern ramification

* Spelt throughout by Petroosevitch "Kopepet Dagh."

of the Khezar Mesdjid forms the remarkable natural fortress of Kelat and the ridge of Moozderan.

"In this manner the whole of the northern part of Khorassan is cut up by mountain ridges, disposed in parallels from east to west, or very nearly in a regular direction. Between the ridges stretch broad valleys, abundantly watered by streams and occupied by the inhabitants of the above-mentioned provinces. The junction of the Kopet Dagh with the northern shoots of Mount Khezar Mesdjid takes place between the provinces of Kuchan and Deregez; consequently, all the country lying to the east of this junction belongs to Deregez, and to the west to Kuchan. On the southern side Kuchan is separated from Deregez by the mountain branches of Allah Akber, extending from Khezar Mesdjid: on the north it is protected by two mountain branches, commencing at the junction of the Kopet Dagh with the northern spurs of Khezar Mesdjid. The southern mountain branch is designated Kizil Baeer, and the northern Zar-i-Kuh. They take their rise on the west, at the junction of the Kopet Dagh with the spurs of the Khezar Mesdjid; and they extend almost parallel with one another towards the east for 45 miles, to the Tekke settlement of Gyaoors. In this manner Deregez lies between the Kizil Baeer and Allah Akber ridges, composed of a broad valley, well watered by the Dooroongyar, escaping from the point in Kuchan where the Kopet Dagh joins the southern branches of Khezar Mesdjid. It may be added that Deregez is situated entirely outside the region of the Atrek.

"To cut short the orology of Khorassan, I may

briefly state that the ramifications of the Elburz range take an easterly direction after leaving the Caspian, and that the Kopet Dagh, stretching south-east of Kizil Arvat, merges with them between the provinces of Deregez and Kuchan, and gives rise to the Atrek, and other rivers. Further, it may be stated that the whole of the northern part of Khorassan consists of parallel mountain ridges, with valleys watered by streams escaping east or west; the watershed lying between the provinces of Kelat, Kuchan, and Deregez.

"The eastern frontier of Khorassan extends for 180 miles from Sarakhs to the Herati village of Koosan, passing along the course of the Heri Rood, the upper part of which is called by the people of Khorassan 'Daria-i-Herat,' and the lower, on both sides of Sarakhs, 'Sarakhs Daria' or the 'Tedjend.' The Turcomans generally designate the lower course, beyond where the Sarakhs Daria joins it, the 'Heri Rood.'

"The Heri Rood, flowing from the southern slope of the Paropamisus range, which with the branches of the Elburz forms a general mountain chain, rises near Cabul, and after passing Herat and reaching Koosan, on the Afghan-Persian frontier, turns at right angles to the north, cutting through all the mountains it encounters on the way. Forty-five miles from Koosan it is joined by the rivers Bakharz and Djam and enters a deep narrow valley, bearing the name of Karanki Derbend or Nal Shooni, and extending for a distance of 23 miles. Afterwards the valley gradually opens out, and at the end of 60 miles the Heri Rood receives the Keshaf Rood. Thirty

miles beyond this the river passes the ruins of Fort Naoorooz Abad, and 20 miles further touches Sarakhs. Already during the last stage it enters a plain, which, with the exception of a break of hills a few miles beyond Sarakhs, stretches away direct to Merv and the Oxus.

"In former times the whole of the expanse lying between the Heri Rood, Keshaf Rood, and Djam, was thickly populated; at a more distant period by Tadjiks, then by Taeemoors from Herat, and afterwards by the Salor Turcomans. The Tadjiks, grouped round the formerly important town of Zoor Abad, were driven to Bokhara; the Taeemoors, after being led to Khiva and escaping back again, were destroyed by one of the Khans of Herat, and the Salor tribe was led away to Merv by the Tekkes eight years ago. With the destruction of the settlement of Zoor Abad, which had served as a sort of barrier to the Merv and Sarik Turcomans, the latter were able to lay waste the whole of the expanse referred to.

"From Meshed to the Heri Rood is 72 miles, and to the point where the river divides Khorassan from Herat, 150 miles. The triangle formed by the Keshaf Rood, the Heri Rood, and the road from Meshed to Koosan once contained an immense population; one district alone, Pyas-i-Kuh-i-Djam, being composed of 460 villages. To-day only 20 of these, lying near Meshed, remain in existence. All the rest have been swept away by the Bokharan and Khivan raids of the early part of the present century, and by the Turcoman forays continuing up to to-day.

"During my journey through Khorassan I was able

to visit this district. Not only did I find no villages there along the course of the Heri Rood, but none even near the river. The furthest settlement along the Keshaf Rood is Shaditche, 37 miles from Meshed. Numerous ruins of villages exist beyond. Thirty miles east of Shaditche, at the commencement of the Ak Derbend defile, is the fortification of Ak Derbend, with a guard of 14 men; and, midway between the two places, at Bag-i-Bagan, is a patrol of 4 Shamkhaltchi, to protect the inhabitants from Tekke forays. Along the direct road to the east of Shaditche, near a locality called Olengi Shah, are six more hamlets: Suliemani, Arraoo, Djelal-Abad, Djizabad, Kelmesan, Gaiamai, having collectively about 100 houses belonging to the Seistani and Mervli tribes. These hamlets form a distinct settlement, isolated from the rest of Khorassan, and suffer particularly from the inroads of the Turcomans. The settlement is also the most easterly one of Khorassan. South of Meshed, all the settlements stretch along the Herat road, and none are to be found to the east of it. Hence, although the Persians claim the Heri Rood as their frontier, they have neither any settlement along it nor frontier guards.* No fortified posts either exist, excluding the large fortress of Sarakhs, and the fort of Dowlet Abad, lying 11 miles higher up the Heri Rood, and where only 6 men are main-

* This is not remarkable. The Persians maintain no guards along their Azerbijan frontier, separating Persia from Transcaucassia, and as the nomads of Azerbijan are continually making forays into Erivan, a "question" is ripening there which will ultimately end in a Russian annexation of that rich but neglected province. —C. M.

tained out of a paper force of 20. It is true that the Sertip Ali Mardan Khan Taeemoor is bound to keep up horse-patrols along the left bank of the Heri Rood, but during my visit I saw none on duty, nor yet even traces of them, although we passed several bands of roving Tekkes, raiding along the Herat frontier, and after our departure from the Keshaf Rood a large number of them fell upon 20 Sham-khaltchi, marching along the Sarakhs road from Meshed.

"In this manner, the real frontier of Khorassan to the east does not run along the Heri Rood, but to the west of it, from Sarakhs to Dowlet Abad, and thence, in a south-westerly direction, to the abandoned fort of Shoordje and fort Ak Derbend, and afterwards up the valley of the Keshaf Rood to Shaditche. From this point it runs direct south to the 6 hamlets, near Olengi Shah, to the source of the river Djam at the settlement of Ferimun, and thence along the Djam to the town of Toorbet-i-Sheikh-i-Djam. Afterwards it pursues the main caravan road to the villages of Mooksin Abad and Kyagreez (Kareez), beyond which settlements along the eastern frontier cease for a considerable distance. The enumerated points constitute the real frontier of Persia on the side of Khorassan to the east.*

"The province of Kelat is composed of mountains, forming rocky spurs in such manner that it is only

* Particular attention should be paid to this passage by political writers. The attempt to force a recognition of a no-man's land between Meshed and Herat is, in reality, nothing more than an effort to extend the Turcoman region wedge-fashion between Persia and Afghanistan. Russia, in occupying Merv, will inevitably claim the right to thrust her power along this wedge also.—C. M.

possible to enter it by a few narrow tracks hewn by the agency of water. These wind for miles amidst narrow corridors, where a handful of men could check the progress of a whole army. On this account the defence of Kelat against the Tekkes of Merv is not a difficult matter. At the entrance to all the passes are constructed watch-towers, some with embrasures and towers in the shape of bridges, in consequence of the flooding of the corridors after heavy rains. Such, however, is the listlessness of the Persians, that, in spite of such defences, which at times have turned back thousands of Tekkes, the province has been repeatedly over-run by the Turcomans.

"On the northern border of Kelat, a number of Merv Tekkes yearly grow corn, paying to the ruler of Kelat a tax of one khalvar in seven of the produce. According to information I collected on the border, at Tchaklatcha yearly arrive from Merv 100 families of various clans, at Mainai 100 families, at Dooshakai 200 families, and at Khadji Mamed 30 Turcomans of the Alieli tribe. A settlement of 800 Alieli tents exists also fifteen miles from Khadji Mamed (Aliabad). A few of the Tekkes live permanently in their corn-fields, but most of them return to Merv after gathering in the harvest.

"On the Akhal border of Kuchan are disposed a number of Kurdish settlements, the inhabitants of which constantly make forays against the Turcomans. The border between the Persian province of Kuchan and the Turcoman oasis of Akhal is not regularly defined. We may, however, draw the real northern frontier of Khorassan in the following manner:—

Starting from Sarakhs, in a westerly direction towards Kelat, it traverses the ruins of Karri-Tchaktcha, thence north-west it crosses the ruins of Mainai, Tchaar Deh, Khadji Mamed, and Kakhkoo, which latter ends the province of Kelat. In the neighbouring province of Deregez it passes through the settlement of Kizildja-Kale to the end of the Zar-i-Kuh ridge, and thence along the ridge to the defile which closes the upper part of the valley of Kelte-Tchinar, and the border of Deregez. After this point it proceeds along the Giuluil Dagh ridge (the most easterly portion of the Kopet Dagh); and then along defiles by which the exits of the Feerooze, Koolkoolaou, Gyamaoo, and Gaifan valleys come to an end. Proceeding along the crest of the mountain forming the right side of the Gaifan valley, the border line passes over to the Atrek, lower than Pish Kale, the last village in the province of Budjnurd. After this, we may take for the frontier the course of the Atrek or Goorgan, from the very sources of the latter, since between the sources of the Goorgan and the valley of Mana, on the Atrek, there are no settlements whatever.

"In taking as the frontier of Korassan, and consequently, of Persia also, the above-mentioned northern points, beyond which no Persian settlements exist, it must not be lost to view that the Eelkhani of Budjnurd claims to exercise jurisdiction over two settlements lying far to the north of the border sketched. The first is Karri Kala: the second Nookhoor. The ruler of Budjnurd says that they yearly pay him taxes; Karri Kala to the extent of 300 Toomans, and Nookhoor 100, but his statement is

more than doubtful. Both settlements lie in close proximity to the line of Tekke fortresses—within 20 or 30 miles of them,—while they are situated at a great distance from the settlements of the province of Budjnurd : Karri Kala, for instance, being 188 miles distant, and Nookhoor 135. The people of Karri Kala are Goklan Turcomans, and the people of Nookhoor members of other Turcoman tribes.

"From a distant period the inhabitants of both settlements took part in forays against Khorassan. The Turcomans of Karri Kala, in particular, became so bold in course of time, that they caused the Eelkhani to despatch a regular Persian force against them, and destroy their stronghold. This was done in 1869, since when no one from the Eelkhani has paid them a visit, on account of the valleys intervening between Karri Kala and Budjnurd being infested with bands of Tekkes. Still less intercourse exists between Nookhoor and Budjnurd, although the distance between the two places is not so great. Both settlements assist the Tekkes by giving them guides, &c., but the people themselves do not conduct forays of their own, for fear of bringing another Persian force against them. On the whole, therefore, it may be said that the authority of the Eelkhani over both settlements is less than nominal. It is only the Eelkhani and the Persian authorities who fancy that the places belong to them, but neither can send orders thither, since they would have to be accompanied by an army. In 1876, when Captain Napier proceeded to Karri Kala, in spite of a powerful convoy accompanying him, he had to furnish the Eelkhani a document, stating that he was proceeding on his own risk to

Karri Kala, and releasing the Eelkhani from all responsibility. The Eelkhani's statement about the taxes yearly derived from the two settlements can hardly be supported. Neither Karri Kala nor Nookhoor pay any taxes whatever, but simply send the Eelkhani presents, in the shape of horses, carpets, or something similar. The secret participation of the people in Tekke forays would not fail to bring a fresh Persian force against them, if the Eelkhani did not receive his own.

"The Kopet Dagh range, commencing at Kizil Arvat, stretches in a south-easterly direction to Deregez.* At the foot of it, on the northern side, are situated the Akhal Tekke settlements, first in one line, then in two. At the same time, the frontier of the Persian settlements runs almost in a straight line from west to east, from Mana to Sarakhs, inclining a little to the north in Kelat and Deregez. In consequence of this, towards the east the Akhal Tekke and Persian settlements of Deregez almost touch one another, while towards the west they are separated by a gap of 150 miles.

"The whole of the triangular region lying between the Persian and Tekke settlements is composed of spurs of the Elburz and Kopet Dagh ridges, forming many magnificent valleys, at one period populated by a prosperous people. All have been killed off by

* "The mountain chain from Kizil Arvat east is not designated Etek, as stated by Rawlinson, There exists no general designation for the chain among the Tekkes, each settlement giving its own name to the part of the chain nearest it. Akhal-Etek, Kelat-Etek, Deregez-Etek means 'at the foot of' Akhal, Kelat, and Deregez, and is used to signify the localities at the foot of the mountain ridge."—PETROOSEVITCH,

the Tekkes, who are themselves unable to occupy the triangle, on account of their fewness of numbers and their liability to be exterminated by the Persians if they migrated thither. The climate is exceedingly salubrious; forests clothe the hill-sides, though not to such a degree as further south, in Astrabad, and pasture-land exists in abundance.* Of the character of this region, I speak not from hearsay, but from what I myself saw during my explorations.

"While staying in the valley of Kelte Tchinar, I saw from the mountains the Akhal Tekke villages of Askabat, Gyoshè, and Gëkche. Before me stretched a broad zone of gardens, enclosing the settlements and, according to those who had been there, containing any quantity of peach-trees, nut-trees, and grape-vines. Walnut-trees and vines I myself saw in the valleys of Gaifan and Koosh Khanai. Consequently, if the Akhal Tekke settlements, exposed to the north wind, enjoy such a propitious climate, how much more so must the valleys further to the south, sheltered as they are by mountain ranges! The further one proceeds south of Akhal the more favourable the climatic conditions become for agriculture.

"The final populated point of the Akhal oasis is Gyaoors, situated at the foot of the Zar-i-Kuh, almost opposite the middle of Deregez. Beyond this to Merv stretches a plain covered with *saksaoul*. The river Tedjend traverses the plain and flows past

* To all practical purposes this region is now a Russian possession. Yet political wiseacres still go on chattering about the folly of Russia annexing "deserts" beyond the Caspian!—C. M.

the fortress of Tedjend, built by the Akhal Tekkes under Oraz Khan in 1830. After the Persians drove back the Tedjend Tekkes to Akhal the river washed down the dam Oraz had constructed, and the waters now flow northwards to a swampy lake in the desert. When the river is at its full no fords exist, but during the summer the water gradually decreases in volume, and towards the end of the autumn does not even flow as far as the lake, which, in its turn, diminishes in circuit, and becomes so salt that the water cannot be used for drink. Even in the river itself, the water becomes salt in autumn, although it is possible to drink it. From the exposed bed of the river, however, fresh water can be obtained by sinking wells, and hence the Merv Tekkes coming to the Tedjend to pasture their cattle always have recourse to them, finding water at a very feeble depth.

"The river Moorgab, at its extremity, approaches to within 135–150 miles of the Tedjend Daria. The same distance separates Sarakhs from Merv, lying at the end of the Moorgab. From the middle of Kelat to Merv is 180 miles, and if we exclude the distance from Kelat to the Tedjend, 150 miles. The whole of the expanse between the two rivers consists of sand, interspersed with clayey oases fit for cultivation. Many places are altogether free from sand, and contain traces of former settlements and canals connected with the Moorgab. Particularly remarkable is the huge channel of Kara-Yab, the end of which approaches to within 45 miles of the Tedjend. Water does not usually flow along this channel, but wells exist at the extremity, and in 1878 the Moorgab, bursting its dam, flowed along the Kara-Yab, and

flooded the adjacent country. It is probable that it would make a regular practice of this, but for the existence of the dam and the absorption of the waters by the 24 principal irrigatory canals of Merv. The exhaustion of the Moorgab by these canals is so great, however, that even at the flood the river does not flow far beyond Merv, although traces of its ancient bed are found in the desert far away to the north.

"In this manner it is apparent that the locality to the north of Merv and Akhal is wholly unfavourable for settled life, while to the south, from a straight line drawn from Akhal to Merv, colonies may be established along both sides of the Tedjend, since it is easy to irrigate the soil with water from the river. It is also possible to conduct the water to localities lying south-west of the Tedjend, because there are a number of streams escaping from the mountains of Kelat and the northern slopes of the Moozderan ridge. It fell to my lot to traverse Sarakhs at the beginning of August, when everything was scorched by the sun, but the sides of the mountains facing the north, *i.e.* towards Sarakhs, were deeply covered with dry grass, and those who had seen the locality in the spring, said that the whole country at that period is clothed with magnificent vegetation. This, I may add, was also assured me by Captain Napier, who had visited Sarakhs at the end of April.

"Such is a general outline of the character of the region lying close to the northern border of Khorassan. Without doubt the expanse situated between the tributaries of the Atrek—the Sumbar and Tchandeer—and the Atrek itself, possesses a climate and soil favourable to the development of agriculture on the largest scale.

North of the Atrek, between the Caspian and the Sumbar, the country, deprived of irrigation, consists chiefly of sand. In eastern Khorassan, between the Persian fort of Sarakhs and the Herati village of Koosan, the surface is hilly, with rocky mountain tops, but valleys abound of the richest description, and are furnished with abundance of water.

"The sides of the mountains in the valley of the Heri Rood are almost exclusively covered with wild pistachio-trees: the streams are bordered by willows and reeds. Beyond, however, along the lateral mountain valleys, few or no forests are to be found, and from the streams to the foot of the hills the ground is covered with reeds. Wild-fowl may be everywhere seen in enormous numbers.

"In Kelat, Deregez, Kuchan, and Budjnurd, the mountains are bare of trees. Only in South Deregez and in Kuchan is the common juniper to be found. In many places there are evidences of the forests having only been cut down in recent times. The grass clothing the mountain-sides is rich and luxuriant. If sheep-rearing has not made much progress in Kelat and Budjnurd, the fact is due less to the climate and vegetation than to the constant forays of the Tekkes. As a proof of what sheep-rearing might be made to be in these provinces, I need only mention that the sheep there lamb twice a year: in June and in November; while with ourselves, even in the Caucasus, it is useless to let them lamb more than once, since the young ones are sure to be killed off by the frost.

"The valleys between the mountains everywhere possess a fertile soil, unacquainted with bad harvests,

because water for irrigation abounds. In many valleys the abundance of water renders it possible for the inhabitants to cultivate rice, and the gardens round about the villages are often so large as to give one an undue notion of the importance of the locality. In the upper valleys wheat and barley are grown, and irrigation is rendered unnecessary by the heavy autumnal rains. If two or three heavy showers fall during September and October, the people are sure of a good harvest. In a word, Deregez, Kuchan, and Budjnurd may be well designated the granary of Khorassan.* The price of wheat in 1878 in these provinces was: in Kuchan and Budjnurd 12 *krans* the khalvar, and in Deregez 16 *krans*, being at the rate of from sixpence to ninepence per pood (36 lbs.) Barley was still cheaper. These prices may be said to be almost permanent in their character, never rising higher.

"As regards the inhabitants of the above provinces they are rarely of one type, consisting mostly of a mixture of Turks, Kurds, and Tadjiks (Persians), or of Turcomans in very small numbers. The province of Budjnurd is populated almost exclusively with Kurds of the Shadil tribe, divided into many clans: in the south only are to be found a few villages belonging to Turks and Tadjiks, or Tartars as they call themselves. In Kuchan Turks are to be found in the valley of Ferooze, where there is a village containing 100 families. The Kurds of Kuchan belong to the Zaferanli tribe: Persians I did not see anywhere. In the province of Deregez the popula-

* These three small provinces will inevitably fall wholly under Russian influence now that Akhal is conquered—C. M.

tion is mixed, consisting of Kurds, Turks, Turcomans, and Persians. The Kurds occupy the more mountainous districts; the Turks are dispersed with the Persians throughout the valleys, and the Turcomans inhabit two or three small settlements lying at the eastern extremity of the Zar-i-Kuh ridge. In Kelat the people are chiefly inhabitants of Khiva, deported thither by Nadir Shah, with a few Persian villages in the south. Recently the population has been increased by 800 Alieli Turcoman families, formerly under the sway of the ruler of Deregez.

"The exact number of people in each province is not accurately known, the rulers themselves being ignorant on that point. The following list, however, may be accepted as tolerably accurate:—

	Families.
"Kuchan . . .	80,000
Deregez . . .	40,000
Budjnurd . . .	40,000
Kelat	10,000
In all . .	170,000 families."

This concludes Petroosevitch's account of the North Border provinces of Persia. The chapter may be appropriately concluded by a condensed translation of his vigorous denial of Rawlinson's assertion, that Russia would be unable to invade Merv from Akhal, in the event of Persia taking up arms along the Turcoman frontier.*

* Appended to Petroosevitch's translation of the *Report of the Royal Geographical Society* (March 1879), containing a paper read by Sir Henry Rawlinson on Merv, 27th January 1879.

Since the preceding pages passed through the press, Petroosevitch has been killed at Geok Tepé. His opinions, however, gain weight from the remarkable confidence placed in him by Skobeloff throughout the campaign.

"Sir Henry Rawlinson has placed on record his opinion that it would be easy for Russia to march from the Caspian upon Merv if assisted by Persia, that it would be a difficult matter if the latter power accorded only her neutrality, and that it would be absolutely impossible if the Shah opposed the movement by force of arms.

"All these conclusions are erroneous, being based upon an exaggerated estimate of the significance and strength of Persia, and an imperfect acquaintance with the locality occupied by the Tekkes of Akhal and Merv.

"The Akhal Tekke oasis stretches in a straight line along the foot of the Kopet Dagh range, from the north-west to the south-east. Its extreme north-west point is Kizil Arvat, and its extreme south-west point Gyaoors, distant 188 miles from each other. Beyond Gyaoors stretches to the south-east a desert (extending likewise to the north and east) for almost 190 miles to the river Moorgab, at the extremity of which lies the oasis of Merv. Through the midst of this desert, a little nearer Akhal than Merv, flows the Heri Rood (Tedjend Daria), a dessicated stream in summer, but in the autumn overflowing its banks and forming marshes in the desert lying between Akhal and Merv. The march along the Akhal Tekke oasis, on account of the abundance of water flowing in streams from the Kopet Dagh towards the north, presents no difficulty whatever; but beyond, from Gyaoors or Askabat, it is necessary to traverse 190 miles of desert, separating Merv from Akhal. May be it is on this account that Rawlinson imagines the only convenient route to Merv to be that from the

Persian fortress of Sarakhs, lying on the Heri Rood, 135 miles south of Merv. Rawlinson says that no disciplined army has ever marched upon Merv in the direction of the oasis of Akhal, while from Sarakhs to Merv the route has been traversed by Persian troops. Further, he says that a general advancing along the Sarakhs-Merv road can make use of the water of the Heri Rood, by leading a special channel in the direction of Merv.

"In 1861 the Persians undertook an invasion of Merv, to annihilate the Tekkes. The 135 miles lying between Merv and Sarakhs is wholly without water, and consequently the Persians constructed a dam across the Heri Rood to drive the waters along the ancient channel. But their efforts were in vain. The stream only coursed 15 miles along its ancient bed, and then the dam broke and was washed away. From Gyaoors to Sarakhs the distance is 150 miles. The first half, from Gyaoors to the ruins of the old settlement of Tedjend, on the Heri Rood, is without water; after which, the road to Sarakhs runs alongside the Heri Rood. In advancing upon Merv direct from Gyaoors, the first 75 miles, to the bed of the Heri Rood, where there are wells in the river-bed, is entirely without water. Beyond this remains 115 miles to Merv. But at the extremity of the extensive old channel of Kara-Yab, 52 miles from Merv, wells exist, and on arriving at the channel itself, along which the surplus waters of the Moorgab flowed in 1878 from one end to the other, no further fear of a scarcity need be apprehended.

"We may contrast the rival routes in the following manner:—

"Askabat or Gyaoors direct to Merv.

"1. Askabat to the Heri Rood	- -	75 miles waterless.
"2. Heri Rood to the Kara-Yab	- - 52	,, ,,
"In all	127	,, ,,

"Askabat to Merv, *viâ* Sarakhs.

"1. Askabat to the Heri Rood	- 75	miles ,,
"2. Sarakhs to Merv	- 135	,, ,,
"In all	210	,, ,,

"Irrespective of the Water Question.

"Distance from Askabat to Merv, direct route	- - 190 miles.
"Distance from Askabat to Merv, *viâ* Sarakhs	- - 285 ,,

"It is at once obvious that the direct route is preferable to the one *viâ* Sarakhs, mentioned by Rawlinson.

"The circumstance referred to by that English writer, that no disciplined army has ever marched upon Merv by way of the Akhal oasis, cannot be accepted as a demonstration of the impossibility of the feat, for the very simple reason that up to the arrival of the Russians, no regular troops had ever existed in the Transcaspian region. The Persian armies marching under Shah Abbas and Nadir Shah were undisciplined bands—in fact, mere hordes, like the hordes of the Mongol conquerors; and if such bands, and similarly constituted armies of the Khivan

Khans, could traverse 450 miles of desert, intervening between Khiva and Merv, although leaving a third and even a half of their men and animals dead on the way, what insuperable obstacle is to be apprehended by a disciplined army marching from Akhal to Merv, furnished with every necessary, and, above all, endowed with the experience of many desert campaigns and many desert marches from Orenburg, Turkestan, and Krasnovodsk?

"The march of our troops to Khiva in 1873 was immensely more difficult than a march from the Akhal oasis to Merv. The Turkestan column, led by General Kaufmann, had to overcome many obstacles. There was a moment when the entire force was threatened with annihilation, owing to a scarcity of water. The advance upon Merv would not be attended with any serious difficulties after the oasis of Akhal had been occupied; but the march to Merv, without a previous occupation of Akhal, would be a difficult affair, involving loss and expenditure which positively could not be recompensed by an annexation of Merv. In this manner, if a necessity arises for the seizure of Merv, the task can be accomplished with comparative ease if we establish ourselves beforehand in Akhal, and with immense outlay and loss if we advance upon Merv without securing ourselves by previously establishing a firm grip over the Akhal Tekke Turcomans. In either case Persia is a factor of no account. Any advance upon Akhal or Merv from the Caspian must be made alongside her border, but she cannot impede our movements, even if she wished to do so. The chief difficulty of an advance consists in securing supplies

for the army. All must be brought from Russia in ships, and landed somewhere on the east coast of the Caspian, thence to be conveyed by pack-animals to their destination. Persia can only assist us by the transport of supplies to her northern border, extending close to the Akhal oasis. But the victualling of the troops constitutes only the lesser half of the wants of a column, and thus a refusal to supply food could not wholly paralyze the forward movement; it could only make the advance a little slower. Hitherto we have never yet relied upon Persia for help: we have not received a single ear of corn from her for the victualling of our troops, and Rawlinson cruelly deceives himself in saying that we have regularly selected the Tchikishlar route in preference to the road from Krasnovodsk to Akhal, because by employing the former we have been able to avail ourselves of Persian supplies.*

"Up to 1878 we did not possess a single fortified post on the Atrek. At the beginning of 1870 Colonel Markozoff constructed temporary fortifications at Tchikishlar, but they were soon relinquished, and afterwards all our movements against Kizil Arvat were made from Krasnovodsk. It was only in 1878 that we finally occupied Tchikishlar, because we had previously occupied Tchat, to which it served as a port for procuring supplies. All our operations in 1878 were conducted without any assistance on

* This was written August 29th (O.S.) 1879. At that moment vast quantities of supplies from Persia were pouring into the Russian camp at Tchikishlar, and have since found their way to Skobeleff's depôts in Akhal. All the same, Petroosevitch was undoubtedly correct in asserting that Russia could dispense with the help of Persia.—C. M.

the part of Persia. True we sought to hire camels there, and obtain supplies; but we received neither the one nor the other, and the entire campaign was accomplished by the aid of means derived from the Caucasian shore of the Caspian. Still, while Persia, by forbidding the hire of camels or purchase of corn in her provinces, cannot impede in the slightest our operations in the Akhal Tekke oasis, yet it is undoubtedly more advantageous for us to obtain both as far as possible from her, than to import them from the western coast of the Caspian. Rawlinson's remarks about the power of Persia are insincere.

"The whole of England's efforts in Persia for some time past have been directed towards checking our eastward movement from the Caspian. For this purpose she has done her utmost to get the Teheran authorities to regard the occupation of Akhal as a menace to the peace and prosperity of Persia. In this she has not been successful. Her agents have therefore done their best to strike up an alliance with Akhal and Merv, in order to get the Tekkes to solicit the protection of England. Here, also, her efforts have ended in failure, on the showing of Captain Gill himself, one of the agents in question. The Tekkes have not only refused to accept an English protectorate; they have also forbidden Englishmen to visit them." *

* Captain Gill accompanied Colonel Valentine Baker to the Turcoman border in the capacity of private explorer, and was in no sense an agent of England. Petroosevitch is wrong in his final statement. The Tekkes warmly invited McGregor and Butler to Merv. Their refusal to receive Baker and Gill was due, Butler says, to a hoax, for which the Tekkes were not responsible.—C. M.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CONQUEST OF THE TURCOMANS AND THE COLONIZATION OF THE TRANSCASPIAN STEPPES.

Petroosevitch's account of the depredations of the Turcomans against Russia and her feudatories.—Ravages in Afghanistan.—The occupation of Krasnovodsk a cause of the cessation of Yomood forays.—Piracy in the Caspian suppressed by Russia.—Persia's pacification of the Goklans.—Siege and capture of Karri Kala.—The Tekkes masters of the desert.—The reason why the Sarik Turcomans do not raid to Khiva.—Persia unable to protect her soil.—Imbecility of the Persian Government and cowardice of the troops.—Defeat of the Governor of Astrabad.—The intolerable incapacity of his successors.—Effect of the conquest of Khiva upon the Tekkes of Merv.—Cruel torture of captives.—The great famine of 1871.—Desire of the people of Khorassan to become subjects of Russia.—Forces of the border chiefs.—Extraordinary venality of Persian officials.—Negotiations between the Shah and the Tekkes of Merv.—Russia cannot allow Persia to assume a Protectorate over the Tekkes.—Turcoman outrages against Russia.—Baron Tornau on Turkmenia.—Colonization of the steppes—Decadence of cattle-rearing in Russia.—Need of more pasture-land.—Irrigation of the Aral-Caspian region possible.—Russia's advance eastward.—Future of Turkmenia.—A water-way from St. Petersburg to the Afghan cities of Koondooz and Balkh.—The face of Central Asia liable to be completely changed by the transfer of the Oxus to its ancient bed.

"In Khorassan the general opinion is that Russia means to take India and will do it. Another is a contempt of the reigning dynasty of Persia. This I heard expressed over and over again, coupled with threats the reverse of complimentary. So much is this the case that I do not think the Shah need ever hope for any active support from his Khorassani subjects against Russia. I think they would fight against the Afghans, because they hate them; but they have no reason to dislike the Russians, while all the stories they hear induce respect for that Power. They are not, I think, in the least ill-disposed to the English, but they do not think much of them; we are all very well, they say, but we are not going to win."—COLONEL C. M. MCGREGOR.

"Formerly,* when from the mouth of the river Emba to the south, along the shore of the Caspian, there existed no Russian settlements, the Turcomans were the complete masters of the desert, falling upon everybody and everything. Caravans hardly existed, and if sometimes one journeyed between Orenburg and Khiva, or *vice versâ*, the greatest caution in safeguarding it had to be observed. The Turcomans plundered both their own people and strangers. The Sariks robbed the Salors, the Tekkes the Goklans, and all four the Persians, Bokharans, and Khivans. In particular the Khorassan province of Persia suffered from their depredations, and the whole of the eastern district, as far as the frontier with Herat, was finally laid in ruins. In one circuit alone, Pyass-i-Kuh-i-Kharabai, lying on the left bank of the Heri Rood, where used to be once 460 villages barely 20 remain to-day. Similar instances may be found in the provinces of Kelat, Deregez, Kuchan, and Budjnurd; the inhabitants remaining only where they have been able to secure

* A translation, here and there abridged, of the remaining part of General Petroosevitch's *Turcomans between the Old Bed of the Oxus and the North Persian Frontier.*

an asylum for themselves among the strongholds in the mountains. The whole of the Atrek region to the east of Budjnurd has been deprived of human habitations. The Turcoman is supreme in that desolate expanse.

"Khiva and Bokhara suffer equally from the raids of these nomads. In 1876 they robbed the town of Pitnak, in Khiva. In 1877 the Tekkes destroyed a caravan at Balikli, 52 miles from the Khivan city of Koonia-Urgentch, and robbed the settlement of Isamood, 11 miles from the ruins of Izmookheer. In 1876 the Tekkes also attacked the fort of Kabakli, and a year earlier destroyed all the Ersari Turcoman encampments at the Rapetak Wells, 90 miles from the Bokharan town of Tchardjui. The very navigation of the Amu Daria, between Fort Kablakli and the town of Pitnak, a distance of 225 miles, is rendered dangerous by the Turcomans, who lie in wait for the boats, and rob them when they touch the left bank of the river.

"Afghanistan does not escape the raids of the Turcomans, chiefly of the Sarik tribe. They penetrate to the very heart of Afghanistan and lead away slaves thence to the Moorgab. A raid on a very extensive scale was organised against Maimene in 1877, but, luckily, it did not end well for the Sariks. The Turcomans were encountered by Afghan troops, and few of them survived the conflict.

"Such recent instances of their outrages may afford a clue to the devastating sway exercised by the Turcomans when they had greater scope of action. The curtailment of their ravages is due to the dominion we have established over the east shore of

the Caspian, the mouth of the Atrek, and the right bank of the Oxus. With the occupation of Krasnovodsk in 1869, the position of the Turcoman tribes living adjacent to Persia became entirely changed. Previous to the descent of the Russians, the Turcomans were at liberty to do what they liked, and indulged freely in forays; but with the occupation of Krasnovodsk and Tchikishlar the Yomoods, hemmed in north and west by the Russians, east by the Tekkes, and south by the Persians, had to forego their plundering habits. The Djafarbai Yomoods, recognising Russian supremacy, no longer indulge in raids, and the Atabai Yomoods, under Persian rule, give way only to petty pilfering, without which no Turcoman can exist. Along the east coast of the Caspian, Turcoman raids may be regarded as having completely ceased; and if from time to time the Yomoods make attacks on the people of the North Persian border, such conduct is due to the cowardice of their neighbours and the senseless stupidity of the Persian authorities. With the establishment of our power along the north bank of the Atrek even these attacks will cease, and the Yomoods there will follow the example of their Krasnovodsk tribesmen, and settle down to agriculture and the breeding of cattle.*

* Consul Churchill, in his consular report for 1879, says, in writing from Astrabad:—"In former years the Turcomans inhabiting the estuaries at the mouth of the Atrek and Goorgan were in the habit of visiting the coast of Mazenderan in their luggers, of which they always had a plentiful supply, and carrying off the inhabitants, whom they sold in the markets of Khiva, but since the establishment of the Russians at Ashoorada, these piratical excursions have been completely put a stop to by the

"The Goklans became pacified still earlier than the Yomoods. Occupying a district between the immensely more powerful Yomood and Tekke tribes, they could not do otherwise than make friends with the Persians, and seek their protection. If they are now at all hostile towards the latter, the feeling arises from the manner they are treated by the Persians, in the person of the ruler of Budjnurd, who exacts from them yearly 24,000 Toomans, whereas the tax imposed by the Teheran authorities is only one-third that amount.

"Formerly the Goklans exercised terror over the provinces of Astrabad, Shahrood, and Budjnurd. The Goklans of Karri Kala, in particular, were noted for their excesses. Situated 75 miles from the nearest Goklan and Tekke encampments, the Goklans of Karri Kala maintained a separate existence by themselves. With the Tekkes, who otherwise would have swept them off the face of the earth, they kept on good terms, allowing their settlement to serve as a halting-place for Akhal raiders, and giving the latter, when necessary, experienced guides. In 1860 300 of the Karri Kala Goklans and 400 of the Tekkes raided together against the village of Arb, lying 22 miles from Shahrood. The people having hitherto enjoyed immunity from Turcoman forays were easily

admirable measures adopted by the Russian naval commanders at that station, and the Persian Government has every reason to be thankful for the high-handed authority exercised by the Russians over these marauders, in a neighbourhood that had always proved a thorn in Persia's side. Thanks to the presence of the Russians at Ashoorada, the Mazenderanees are now safe from the depredations of the Turcomans."—*Reports of British Consuls Abroad*, 1880. —C. M.

surprised at night: the village was sacked, large numbers of peasants were killed, and 40 were led away into captivity. The ruler of Budjnurd, Djafar-Kuli-Khan, set out to chastise the Karri Kala Goklans, but had to return defeated. In 1869, the new ruler of Budjnurd, Hyder-Kuli-Khan-Sagamood-Dowleh, brother of the former Eelkhani, advanced against Karri Kala with a force of all arms. A prolonged siege made no impression on the fortress: the Persians had to storm it. The assault was delivered, but the garrison fought so stoutly that the Persians were compelled to fall back, and failure appeared imminent, when a woman, who had been taken prisoner by the Goklans, appeared on the walls and taunted the attackers with their cowardice. The pathetic address of this woman had such an effect on the besiegers that even Sagamood Dowleh himself was moved to tears. An order was given to storm the place afresh; the attack being mainly delivered against an isolated tower of the fortifications. The successful capture of this inspired the rest of the storming columns to fresh exertions: the Kala was entered on two other sides: the Goklans fell back and lost heart; and then, rather than surrender, large numbers killed their wives and children, and afterwards put an end to their own lives. The capture of Karri Kala was the last episode of the Goklan struggle. Since then the Goklans have ceased their regular forays. With the appearance of the Persians in force they always make their submission. But it must not be imagined that they lead perfectly orderly lives. The Goklan district is still a dangerous one for wayfarers, and the inhabitants are only too ready

to indulge in crimes against person and property. As, however, this state of things is common to every part of Persia, the conduct of the Goklans is regarded with indifference by the ministers of the Shah.

"After the pacification of the Yomoods by Russia, and of the Goklans by Persia, the theatre of forays along the northern parts of Khorassan and Afghanistan remained open to the Tekke and Sarik Turcomans. The Tekkes are complete masters of the desert to-day. No caravan can travel without a strong military force to protect it, and it may be said that, in consequence of their raids, no caravan communication between Khiva and Krasnovodsk, and even between Khiva and Bokhara and Persia, exists whatever. Perhaps once in a year a caravan may venture forth from one country to another, but the utmost vigilance has to be observed, and the strictest secrecy maintained respecting the time selected for marching from one halting-place to another. On this account the eastern shore of the Caspian has remained without inhabitants, and there has been no development of commerce from one extremity to the other. Caravans are unable to proceed to Krasnovodsk from Khiva, as the safety of the party would be in danger every moment during the 450 miles' march.

"The Sarik Turcomans do not raid in the direction of Khiva, partly because the khanate is too far from their settlements, and partly because they have a preference for the borders of Khorassan, Afghanistan, and Bokhara. Even the Tekkes do not obtain much plunder from Khiva: the borders of that khanate being guarded by populous settlements

belonging to the Yomoods, who do not cede to the Tekkes in bravery and who are perfectly able to return blow for blow. In the desert to the north of Akhal the Tekkes find no booty at all.

"In this manner it may be said that the sole arena left for the raids of the Tekkes is the northern part of Khorassan, where plunder may be found in profusion. The ravages of the Tekkes in this direction have almost driven the people out of their senses. Whole districts have been completely depopulated. The Akhal Tekkes penetrate even to the southern road from Shahrood to Meshed, lying 225 miles from their settlements, while the Merv Tekkes extend their ravages to the province of Kaine, 750 miles from Merv. Such is the terror they inspire, that the caravans of pilgrims journeying from Shahrood to Meshed are unable, for more than 100 miles, to march without the protection of a powerful military convoy.

"The Persian Government itself is not in a position to defend its soil from the Tekkes and Sariks along a frontier 750 miles in extent, and thus leaves the border provinces of Kuchan, Budjnurd, and Deregez to find their own means of protection. At Meshed it maintains 4 battalions of infantry (4,000 on paper, 2,000 in reality) with a number of old and worthless guns. But the Persians, owing to their cowardice, are so little fitted to wage a war of offence, that the Tekkes have the game entirely in their hands. They can choose their own time for the raid, and even if they secure only a little plunder, they are conscious all the while that their tents and families are safe from a counter-attack. Sometimes, it is true, a daring

foray arouses the Persians into activity, but their operations, even when conducted on a large scale, mostly end in failure. The best demonstration of the impotence of the Persians, of the cowardice of their troops, and of the gross incapacity of their leaders, is to be found in the disaster at Merv in 1861, when the entire Persian army was conquered by the Tekkes, and half the soldiers surrendered with their weapons in their hands.

"Such instances as this may also be found in the operations of the Persian troops against the Djafarbai Yomoods of Astrabad. In 1869 Shah Zade Moolkara, Governor of Astrabad, marched to the Persian fort of Ak-Kala, 15 miles distant, to punish the Djafarbai. The Turcomans, instead of waiting to be attacked, stormed him there, and captured a gun, which the Persians afterwards ransomed. They also destroyed large numbers of people from Astrabad, hastening to the assistance of the beleaguered governor, and severely wounded the governor's son. It was only by a mere chance that Shah Zade and his army escaped complete extinction. In 1876 another governor, Sabakhtear Khan, at the head of a large force, was defeated 15 miles from Astrabad by a small body of Turcomans, and had to seek safety in flight. The pursuit of the Yomoods was so keen that many of the Persian cavalry, unable to reach the bridge of the Kara Su, were driven into the marshes, where they were captured, and the governor himself was severely wounded. In 1878 the successor of Sabakhtear, Djansooz Meerza, marched to a camp at Ak Kala, with 2,000 infantry, some cavalry, and a few guns, and remained there a year, unable to show his nose

outside the place, for fear of a Turcoman attack. In a word, instances of the victory of small bands of Turcomans over large bodies of Persians are both recent and numerous. On this account, it is not surprising to find that the north of Persia is rapidly growing less populous; and it may be predicted that if things go on much longer in this fashion, the whole of northern Khorassan will ultimately fall into ruins, as has already occurred with many districts of that unhappy region.

"An alteration of affairs, by a repression of the Tekkes, in the same manner that the Yomoods have been repressed along the Caspian and in Khiva, is only possible by the annexation to Russia of the whole of the expanse stretching from the old bed of the Oxus to the Persian frontier. Already, by the occupation of Krasnovodsk and the conquest of Khiva, the Turcomans have become quieter; the Khivan expedition, in particular, rendering them less predatory by depriving them of the principal motive for the foray—the kidnapping of people to dispose of as slaves. The conquest of Khiva and the treaty with Bokhara, rendering slavery illegal, closed the markets where the nomads had been accustomed to dispose of their booty. No others were open to them, and thus, Persian slaves having lost their value, Turcoman raids have largely diminished, especially on the part of the Yomoods.

"To-day the Turcomans retain captives in the hope of obtaining ransom for them. As, however, the Persians kidnapped are mostly poor, the ransom money never amounts to much, and is often not obtained at all. To stimulate the relations of the

prisoners to send money for their release, the Turcomans subject their captives to torture, immersing their legs in boiling water, placing red hot embers on their stomach, and so forth. The further extension of Russian influence over the Turcoman region may be expected to diminish even this species of Yomood activity.

"In the meanwhile, the Turcomans of the Tekke tribe have the game in their hands. The Persians are not only unable to quell them, but cannot even defend their own border. In the province of Deregez the people live in constant fear of attack. The inhabitants adjacent to the Tekke region have one reliance only—that the Russians will some day come and crush the Turcomans. Sooner or later, they believe the Tekkes will be repressed by us in the same manner that we have pacified Khiva, Bokhara, Kokan, and the Yomoods.

"All the villages of Persia are surrounded by clay walls, in the shape of a regular parallelogram. The walls are never less than 4 yards high, with a thickness at the summit of 6 feet, broadening out towards the base. Inside the walls are situated the houses, and outside the gardens and fields. Most of the walls are pierced with two gates, but the smaller villages have only one. At nightfall these are securely fastened, and are kept closed until dawn. Without such precautions it would be impossible to live at all in the north-east provinces of Persia; owing to the nocturnal raids of the Tekkes.

"In 1871 there was a terrible famine in Persia, destroying, according to the reports of the English relief agents, one-fifth of the entire population. The

Persians have no other product to rely upon but corn. They have no forests or lakes affording animals or fish for food; and thus, when bread failed them, they had no escape from starvation. The Tekkes took advantage of this state of affairs to overrun the country. The province of Kelat, which had hitherto kept itself clear of Turcomans, was devastated from one extremity to the other, and reduced to a desert. From one village alone, Kara Tekkian, the Turcomans bore away 500 families as slaves, and although after the capture of Khiva, two years later, the Persians were set free by Russia and returned to their homes, only 100 families are to be found at Kara Tekkian to-day. The province itself has never recovered from the famine and the Turcoman invasion, and many of its villages continue to lie in ruins.

"In 1878 a large body of Merv Tekkes ravaged Toorook, a village of 500 families within 5 miles of Meshed, the capital of Khorassan, and boasting of 70,000 inhabitants. In October, 1878, they plundered a village ten miles from Mahmood-Abad, the administrative centre of Deregez, and a few days afterwards a band of 1,500 Tekkes surprised the fortified settlement of Naoua, in the province of Kuchan, and carried off more than 100 men into slavery.

"Hundreds of such instances exist on record, and might be quoted did we have room. When I visited Naoua in 1878, our party was taken for a band of Turcomans. The moment we were seen the shepherds abandoned their flocks, and the entire village came out in arms to defend their property. Great was their joy when they found we were not Turcomans. In the warmest terms they asked us to

partake of their hospitality. On all sides questions were put to us as to when the Russians were coming to deliver them from the Tekkes. It was evident from what they said, that they believed it was only the Russians who could put an end to the Tekke scourge.*

"The people of the North Persian provinces expect no alleviation of their lot from the government officials, for, not to speak of their cowardice, the interests of the rulers of the whole of northern Khorassan are bound up in the maintenance of the present state of things.

"The inhabitants of the provinces of Astrabad, Budjnurd, Kuchan, Deregez, and Kelat are exempt from service in the regular army, and furnish only militia, who do not serve outside the provinces to which they belong.* The province of Astrabad, besides, escapes payment for the maintenance of the officials and troops sent to protect it from the Turcomans; the governor drawing sums for this purpose from Teheran and elsewhere. The provinces of Budjnurd, Kuchan, Deregez, and Kelat pay taxes to their governors, who are supposed to maintain a certain number of horsemen. They, however, do

* The people of the Perso-Turcoman border "look upon the Russians as their friends, inasmuch as they have given them considerable relief from the persecution they have suffered during centuries at the hands of the border tribes. They know the Russians as folks who, whether intentionally or otherwise, have shielded them from evils which their own Government showed itself impotent to prevent. A Russian army marching through these districts would be received with open arms, and, as the Russians generally pay for what they get or take, would be welcomed a second time."—Special Correspondent of the *Daily News*, Kuchan, September 1880.—C. M.

nothing of the sort, and the money generally remains in the pockets of the governors. Elsewhere in Persia the people not only pay heavy taxes, but are liable to serve in the army in any part of the Shahdom, including Budjnurd, Deregez, &c. This state of affairs suits the governing classes in North Khorassan, and if the Turcomans cease their raids for a time, they do not fail to receive encouragement to repeat them. In Astrabad such invitations are common, because the owners of the villages are usually at the head of the militia protecting them, and hence, if the Turcomans permanently ceased their forays, the Teheran authorities would abolish their commands, withdraw their salaries, and perhaps send them on military service away from their homes. On this account most of the proprietors of small villages in Astrabad, denominated Serkerdés, are in league with the Turcomans, and encourage them to make their attacks. An instance of this may be found in the conduct of Abdus Semet Khan, Serkerdé of Surkhan Kala. His brother, nephew, uncle, and son have fallen in Turcoman attacks, or have been carried off into slavery, while his own village of Surkhan Kala has been several times laid in ruins. Yet he does not fail to solicit his friends the Turcomans to repeat their visits if they stay away too long!

"In this manner the disorders of Persian administration, the meanness of the rulers, from the highest to the lowest, and the cowardice of the people all round, give every probability of a continuance of the Tekke raids, unless fear of Russia drives the Turcomans into seeking to become subjects of Persia,

and compels them thereby to forego their forays. Ever since the fall of Khiva the Tekkes have felt their independence on the wane. Already in 1873 they began to think of giving allegiance to Persia, and in 1876 in particular, when the Krasnovodsk column marched to Kunia Urgentch, the Tekkes of Akhal and Merv felt so convinced of an attack on the return of the detachment, that they sent 40 delegates to Teheran to negotiate for submission to the Shah. The column returned without interfering with the Tekkes, who thereupon broke off the negotiations with Persia. In 1877 the detachment advanced to Kizil Arvat, and the Tekkes again resumed negotiations, breaking them off, however, directly the column returned. In 1878 the simultaneous movement of the Krasnovodsk and Turkestan detachments threatened the final destruction of the Tekkes of Akhal and Merv. The Merv Tekkes were struck with fear, and offered the Meshed authorities, in the event of the incorporation of their oasis with Persia, to return six of the cannon captured in 1861, to place at the disposition of the Shah 1,000 horsemen, the same to receive from his Treasury 20 Toomans a year, and to deport to Sarakhs, as hostages, 1,000 Tekke families. But even these negotiations did not end successfully for Persia, in spite of her strong desire to annex the Tekkes of Merv, for the moment it was known that the Russian columns had returned, the Turcomans refused to discuss the matter any further, and the Khorassani envoy, Sertib Nasrulla-Khan-Djami, had to return empty-handed to Meshed from Sarakhs, where he had vainly wasted five months in negotiation, and

had disbursed 500 Toomans (£250) in presents among the influential Tekke chiefs.

"For Russia it is inconvenient to allow Persia to assume a protectorate over the Turcomans, because she is not in a position to keep them in order, and her authority would thus be a fictitious one. Besides, under the cover of a protectorate the Tekkes would direct their attention more to the north of their oases; *i.e.* to the region inhabited by our Kirghiz and Turcoman subjects, and traversed by the caravans from Khiva to Orenburg and Krasnovodsk. In 1876 and 1877 there were several cases of outrages inflicted by the Tekkes against the Mangishlak Kirghiz and Krasnovodsk Turcomans. Flocks were seized, their owners carried away into bondage, and the entire Turcoman encampments at Boornak, near Krasnovodsk, were destroyed at a blow. It was the same with the caravans. In 1875 the Tekkes destroyed at the Koom Sebshen wells, midway between Khiva and Krasnovodsk, a caravan fitted out by Colonel Gloukhovsky; and in 1877 they pillaged at Balakli, 52 miles from Kunia Oorgentch, and 30 from the border camps of the Yomoods, a caravan proceeding from the Atrek to Khiva. In consequence of these outrages, several caravans had to take a circuitous route to the north, and convoys were sent from the Krasnovodsk garrison to the wells of Koom Sebshen to meet them. In 1877 the Tekkes also captured the Russian couriers conveying the post from Petro-Alexandrovsk to Krasnovodsk.

"If the Tekkes made their peace with the Persians, and gave them hostages, they would be com-

pelled to cease their forays into Khorassan: otherwise, the Persians would make no difficulty of putting an end to the hostages. Consequently, in that case, the sole remaining arena for Tekke forays would be the northern steppes, stretching to Khiva and Mangishlak, and the whole energies of the nomads of Merv and Akhal would be directed against our subjects and caravans. The Kirghiz of Mangishlak would not have a moment's peace. We should be compelled to send expeditions yearly to punish the raiders; and in this manner would find ourselves involved in constant war. The disadvantageousness of such relations with the Turcomans is obvious. We need only remember the Caucasus, where 60 years' war with the hillmen led, in the long run, to their complete subjugation after immense losses in blood and money. And yet the Caucasus might have been conquered many years earlier.

"Baron Tornau, in his preface to Bode's book on the Turcomans, observed among other things: 'The travels of Baron Bode may be partly said to possess interest exclusively for the Russian public. The littoral of the Caspian is important to us, not so much as regards the present as the future. The Caspian Sea is the exclusive property of Russia and Persia: our possessions there are only two or three days' distance from the region explored by Baron Bode, and which contains openings for commerce where we shall find no foreign rivals. The coast of the Caspian and the countries of Central Asia to the east, richly endowed by nature, but lacking manufactures and industries, constitute a market

where mercantile transactions may be developed to an enormous extent.'

"These words were written twenty-three years ago. At that period we were situated two or three days' distance from the region visited by Baron Bode. We occupy it to-day, and our rule stretches still further east. Twenty-three years ago we stood on the Syr-Daria: to-day we stand on the Oxus. At that period we had only the prospect of establishing markets in Central Asia: to-day we are masters of the region, and, but for the forays of the Tekkes, we should be complete masters of the Transcaspian steppes. At present caravans are compelled to take a circuitous route; whereas, if the Tekkes were pacified, they would select the shorter and cheaper direct road. The overflow of the Oxus has suggested the possibility of irrigating the Turcoman deserts, and establishing a water-way along which manufactures from Middle Russia may pass uninterruptedly to the sources of the Oxus, *i.e.* 3,000 miles. But all our efforts to organise the steppe region, and improve it, will be unavailing so long as the Tekkes remain unsubjugated. Without their repression beforehand, the establishment of a water-way from Khiva to the Caspian would be only to their benefit. At present, for want of water, they merely send out bands of horsemen, but in that case they would establish regular camps, and not a rider or traveller on foot would be able to traverse the Caspian steppes, for fear of these desperate robbers.

"It may be asked why Russia should concern herself about the Turcoman steppes, why she should pacify the Tekkes and irrigate unpopulated and unfruitful

sandy wastes? But the Caspian steppes are unfruitful simply because there is no water: with water their character would change in a moment. The insignificance of the population to-day must not be accepted as a sign of the uselessness of the region in the future. The population of Russia is rapidly on the increase. At the same time, land fitted for the breeding of cattle and horses in herds is proportionately diminishing. The time is not far distant when no land at all will be left for these pursuits. Already in the Caucasus a scarcity of pastoral land is felt, and in the northern Caucasian provinces, where numerous herds of horses were common, only a recollection of their existence remains to-day. Only to the north of the province of Stavropol, and to the north-east of the district of the Don, and north-west of the Kouban region, remains an expanse affording free roaming-grounds for herds of horses and flocks of sheep; but there also, in less than 25 years, the increase of population will sweep the open space away. Unless we possess then the steppes of Central Asia, we shall have to fall back on Australia and America for our supplies of cattle and wool.

"Already our Russian tanners are commencing to import skins from South America, not merely because our herds of cattle are diminishing, but because the leather is of more even thickness; the latter circumstance being due to the fact that our South Russian oxen are worked to death in the villages, while the South American cattle develop freely in the prairies.

"On this account the Turcoman steppes of Central Asia possess a special importance for Russia, as an

arena for cattle-rearing on the largest scale. The irrigation of the steppes by means of wells, and by the introduction of the waters of the Syr and Amu Daria, is the business of technical engineers, and cannot be attempted so long as the Tekkes dominate the region. Not only do these robbers check commerce and prevent the development of pastoral pursuits, but they also render the exploration of the region impossible, menacing every traveller with death or slavery.

"The irresistible force of circumstances, and the conditions of our existence, impel us towards the East. The commencement of this movement coincides with the time of Ivan the Terrible (1533—1584). The conquest of Kazan was the first step, and ever since then, during three successive centuries, we have been pushing out further and further towards the East. The greater part of the steppes of Central Asia are to-day behind our foreposts, and we are now approaching the limit of the movement. With the pacification of the steppes of Central Asia will practically cease those military operations, which have cost us so much blood and money. Then will commence the period of actual peace, and Russia will be at liberty to occupy herself with the organisation of the vast territory lying between the sources of the Amu and Syr on the one hand, and the Caspian Sea on the other. Then, at last, commerce will be able to circulate freely through its proper channels, and new combinations will be formed, of which we can have no conception to-day, especially if, by the diversion of the Oxus along its ancient bed to the Caspian, we open up an uninterrupted water-

way from the shores of the Baltic to the passes of the Hindoo Koosh."*

* As an explorer of the old bed of the Oxus and the Turcoman steppes, General Petroosevitch speaks with authority upon this point. At a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, January 27th, 1879, Sir Robert Michell derided the notion of Russia fertilising the desert lying between the Aral and Caspian, and observed that she would hardly concern herself about a water-way there when she was so neglectful of the condition of her high-roads at home. In criticising the meeting, Petroosevitch vigorously attacks Michell on this score, and maintains that Russia has more to heart the development of her Asiatic possessions than England, "who found India provided with a vast system of irrigation and storage of water, and has allowed it to decay to such a degree that famines, involving a loss of two or three million lives, are of yearly occurrence in the peninsula." Without entering into this matter, I may express an opinion that Michell drew a wrong inference from the condition of Russian roads, the truth being that Russia has always been more willing to engage in grandiose schemes abroad than attend to humbler and more useful public works at home. No one knows better than Michell that Russia is fond of big undertakings, in spite of her constant failures in that line; and hence the question of diverting the Oxus to the Caspian should be treated seriously by England, since the accomplishment of such an enterprise would change the face and fate of Central Asia.—C. M.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE KHORASSAN QUESTION,

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED THE MERV QUESTION.

PART I.—MERV.

A greater question than that of Merv.—A plea for the poor Khorassani.—Russia's right to annex Akhal and Merv.—A defence of Russia against the friends of the Turcomans.—A *régime* of failure and ferocity.—Russia's relations with the Turcomans.—Too late for England to save Akhal.—The seizure of the border region of Khorassan.—Russia's right to conquer Merv.—The impotence of modern Persia and the impossibility of a Persian Protectorate over the Turcomans.—The future of Persia.—Results of a conquest of Merv.—Russia drawn by inexorable force of circumstances to Herat and Candahar.—Khorassan annexed to Russia.—The Cossacks in Meshed.—English policy in the East.—What the conquest of Merv really means.—A new aspect of Krijanovsky's famous speech.

"At present there is an uneasiness about Merv, and the Russophobist party are using all their efforts to show, either that the Russians must not be allowed to take Merv, or if they do take it, that Herat must be occupied. In all probability, Merv will be occupied by the Russians, and in all probability the English Government will do nothing at all. *It would seem wiser and more dignified, instead of subjecting the Russian Foreign Office to constant petty annoyances, to allow the Russians plainly to understand what limits they could not pass in their onward movement.* A state of mutual suspicion bodes no good to the relations of any government."—SCHUYLER.

"The attitude of England towards Russia with regard to Central Asia can hardly be called a dignified one. There are constant questions, demands for explanations, and even threats—at least in the newspapers, and in Parliament—*but nothing is ever done.* Outcries were made about the expedition to Khiva, but when the occupation had once become a *fait accompli*, the same men and the same journals said that no harm was done."—ISBD.

A CAREFUL perusal of the foregoing chapters must have brought home one broad central fact very clearly to the reader: that the Merv question is swiftly merging in the greater question of Khorassan, and that while English statesmen are coddling their indecision in regard to the future of Afghanistan, Russia is secretly absorbing the richest province of Persia, through which runs the real road of invasion from the Caspian to India.

Let us deal with the Merv Question first; then, having disposed of the Turcomans, devote our attention to this fresh and unrecognised phase of the Central Asian Question.

Few Englishmen, I believe, after reading the account of the Turcoman scourge, can have a very ardent sympathy for the nomad possessors of Merv. An attempt has been made in one or two quarters to promote an intervention of England in the Merv Question, on the grounds that the Turcomans are a brave and independent people (in fact, republicans of the purest type), whose chief crime is that they defend their black felt tents and clay-wall strongholds (like the ancient Britons their groves) against the ruthless, aggressive invader, by whose malevolent tongue their occasional forays into Persia have been grossly exaggerated. Such assertions cannot stand the test of facts. The indictment of Petroosevitch

and Grodekoff is heavy enough, but their aggregate charges are not half so damning as the clear and uncontrovertible accusations of Vámbéry and McGregor, both of whom are bitterly opposed to a Russian annexation of Merv, and who would be only too glad to be able to say a good word on behalf of the graceless nomads. No; brave the Turcomans undoubtedly are, and self-governing to an extraordinary degree, but they are an anachronism and a curse, and have done their best by their devastating raids to provoke the chastisement of Russia. Let us frankly admit the truth: we care for the Turcomans not for their sakes, but for our own. If sentiment must be dragged into this purely political matter, let it, in God's name, be given to those wretched Khorassanis, who are languishing to-day in chains at Merv, slaves to a cold, callous, unfeeling race of people.

We have had enough of false sentiment and false argument about the Merv Question. It will not do for the Conservative party to pursue any longer the plea of the "Poor Turcoman." Such a cry can only have the inevitable effect of compelling Liberals to take the part of the poorer and the more-to-be-commiserated Khorassani, and we shall have the miserable Bulgarian business over again, with the same result of Russia astutely slipping in between the squabbling factions, and successfully accomplishing her designs. In common justice, let us think of the Khorassani slave quite as much as of the Turcoman man-stealer, and then decide our policy towards both by the light of our own Imperial interests. Captious critics may detect a ring of selfishness in this

concluding suggestion; but, after all, the interests of England are the interests of humanity, of freedom, and of progress. It is no crime to be ever anxious for the welfare of an Empire which our forefathers bought with their blood, and which, in these no-responsibility, valetudinarian times of ours, many English statesmen deem it a virtue to be ashamed of.

Russia claims the right to conquer the Turcomans on the ground of their predatory habits, and her need of a firm frontier to mark the limits of her territory from the Oxus to the Caspian; than which, she alleges, a better line cannot be found than that running through Akhal and Merv to Tchardjui, or, Khoja Saleh. There is a show of reason in both these pretensions, and it is only fair to examine them in detail.

It is a matter beyond dispute that the Tekkes constantly attack the caravans journeying from Khiva to the Caspian with goods for the Nijni Fair, and murder solitary travellers on the Uzboi steppe; besides laying waste the encampments of friendly Turcomans at Khiva, and of Khirgiz shepherds at Mangishlak. Redress for these outrages it is impossible for Russia to obtain otherwise than by the sword. Among the Tekkes no individuals exist with sufficient authority to become answerable for the conduct of the clans, and powerful indeed would have to be that influence that could put down in a moment the kidnapping foray, the most meritorious of acts in Akhal and Merv—sanctified by the prayers of the priest, and immortalized in the lays of the minstrel. Against such a primitive society an expedition of the Ashantean description must inevitably fail, since the Tekkes

would be sure to resume their predatory pursuits the moment the Cossack—that policeman of the steppe—had spurred his pony past the ruined walls of Kizil Arvat. Russia, then, having a moral right to avenge by force of arms outrages perpetrated upon her subjects, and only asserting that right by invading Akhal and Merv, we must not be surprised if we find her preferring the annexation of those oases to sending yearly, in the shiftless English fashion, costly expeditions across the steppe to punish an irrepressible community of desert banditti. Every right-minded man must admit, that the police administration of the desert between the Aral and Caspian seas can only be effectually carried out by establishing a Cossack cordon from Tchikishlar to Bami; thence, *vid* Geok Tepe and Merv, to Tchardjui or Khoja Saleh. Not even England, that country of pure and disinterested intentions, could keep the Aral-Caspian desert clear of crime by simply maintaining a post at Krasnovodsk and another at Khiva. To be emancipated from the murderer and the man-stealer, the steppe must be enclosed. To enclose the steppe, the annexation of Akhal and Merv is a matter of absolute necessity.

It may be alleged that the Turcomans have been provoked into predatory outrages against Russia by her encroachments upon their territory. If raids are common to-day, they are due to an exceptional state of things—in a word, to warfare; and not to a regular practice of man-stealing and murder.

Such a view cannot be seriously maintained in the face of facts to the contrary. The Turcomans were man-hunters long before the Russians came in

contact with them, and they have only ceased their kidnapping pursuits where they have feared the retributory raids of the Cossack. The mouth of the Volga is yearly the scene of the great herring-fishery of Russia. Thousands of boats are engaged in this lucrative pursuit. The Turcomans used to attack the fishing-smacks at night, and carry off the bearded *moujiks* slaves to Khiva and Bokhara. Russian brigs bound for Persian ports were also constantly boarded by Turcoman pirates. To check these outrages, the island of Ashoorada was occupied in 1841; but, although the Russian gunboats were able to prevent piracy on the high sea, they were unsuccessful in quelling it along the coast; and when Vámbéry visited the Atrek 23 years later, he nightly saw Turcoman luggers running in with Persian captives, kidnapped in Mazendran, and himself solaced a wretched Russian man-of-war's man, groaning in chains in the tent of a Yomood chieftain. It was not to be expected that Russia would always put up with such outrages. As sole mistress of the Caspian (Persia being excluded by treaty from maintaining a fleet on the sea), she was bound to extirpate the pirates. The coast was occupied from Krasnovodsk to Tchikishlar, and from that moment the piratical expeditions of the Turcomans may be said to have completely ceased.

The occupation of the East Caspian coast brought Russia, in 1869, for the first time into actual contact with the Tekkes. There is reason to believe, although we have no precise information on this point, that Colonel Stolietoff did not do his best to conciliate the tribe. At any rate, within a few

months of his installation at Krasnovodsk, they attacked the post he had established on the opposite side of the bay, at Michaelovsk, and, in reprisals for this act of hostility, the Russian commander pushed across the steppe to the Kopet Dagh, and blew down the walls of Kizil Arvat. The following year (1871) the Russians again renewed their invasion of Akhal, and ravaged the oasis from Kizil Arvat to Beurma. From that time until the present moment, scarcely a year has elapsed without a Russian raid against the Tekkes, and it is the Czar's misfortune that most of these should have been conducted by a general whose acts will ever tarnish the reputation of the Caucasian army. This is not the place to describe Lomakin's seven years' career, from the time he conducted back the Kinderlinsk column from Khiva, to the day, in 1880, he embarked at Krasnovodsk for Russia, a disgraced and ruined man; although an account of his administration would be rich with interest, and fill up a page of Central Asian history which is a blank so far as England is concerned. Suffice it to say that, from 1873 to 1880, failure and ferocity appear to have been the twin characteristics of Russian rule beyond the Caspian, and justice cannot regret that the culmination of its iniquity—the bombardment of 5,000 women and children at Dengeel Tepé—should have been followed by the immediate collapse of a cruel and corrupt *régime*. Undoubtedly, Russia owes it as much to the incompetency of General Lomakin as to the ambition of the Grand Duke Michael, that the Turcoman question should have assumed its present grandiose proportions. Had Russia sent an Abramoff

or a Kolpakovsky to Krasnovodsk in 1874, the Tekkes would have been conquered before they had learnt the art of constructing bomb-proof ramparts and casemates, and her power to-day would have been consolidated at Geok Tepe, perhaps at Merv.

But if an absence of a conciliatory policy, after the legitimate occupation of Krasnovodsk, must be accepted as a cause of the present invasion of Akhal, it is by no means the only one. In occupying the coast, and forming friendly relations with the Yomoods of the Atrek, Russia became responsible for their immunity from foreign attack. The Tekkes had always been foes of the Yomoods. They still continued their attacks against the tribe after its submission to Russia. Hence, Russia deserves the ear of England when she asserts that she is bound to dominate Akhal, to protect the lives of her Turcoman subjects living between Tchikishlar and Khiva.

It is too late to say to Russia, You must not conquer the Tekkes. She is bound to fly the two-headed eagle above the ramparts of Geok Tepe, in the interests of her Aral-Caspian subjects, and for the maintenance of prestige seriously damaged by Lomakin's successive failures. There are some successes more disastrous than defeats. Such a one was the successful repulse of the Russians in 1879. That Tekke victory sealed the fate of Akhal; and England's power of intervention, before then potential, passed for ever away.

England's attitude towards the Akhal Tekke Turcomans since the occupation of Krasnovodsk cannot be regarded as a dignified one. There has been any amount of tall-talk, and no end of diplomatic corre-

spondence, but England has been beaten by Russia at every point along the line. It is useless to go back to the dismal region of "buts" and "might have beens," and analyse the faults of the Gladstone and the Beaconsfield administrations. History will deal severely with both: with the cabinet that fooled away its chances, while tweedling its thumbs and mumbling the motto "Masterly Inactivity"; and with its rival that proclaimed to the ends of the earth an "Imperial Policy" against Russia, and on never an occasion spoke the right firm word to the Tsar at the decisive moment. Those that care to squabble for the honour of the two factions can do so: for my part, I have no regard for either, and prefer dealing with the present and the future to disturbing the dead, disgraceful past.

It being impossible, then, to save Akhal from seizure, let us, before passing on to the future of Merv, discuss briefly the second of Russia's pretensions—that the annexation of the Akhal oasis, from Kizil Arvat to Gyaoors, is justified by the necessity for a good frontier to round off her Caspian possessions.

If ever there was a model frontier designed by nature for an empire, that of the Kopet Dagh mountains would appear to be the one. From Kizil Arvat the ridge runs for 188 miles to Gyaoors, in the form of a dead blank wall, 3,000 feet in height, and resembling, perhaps, the vertical cliffs of the southern coast of England more than anything else. Along the foot of this rocky wall stretches the Akhal oasis, well watered and fertile, and capable of affording abundance of food and forage to a Cossack frontier

cordon. South of the range are innumerable pleasant valleys, which have no natural limit, if we except the Atrek river, until the Great Salt Desert of Persia is reached, 250 miles beyond. Yet, so far from Russia being content with the natural frontier formed by the Kopet Dagh, she has already laid hands on the hills and dales to the south of it; and having seized the Atrek, claims the region still further south, stretching to the Goorgan; which river has no pretensions whatever to being a scientific frontier. Even the Salt Desert border, 70 miles south of the Goorgan, can never serve as that barrier which Petroosevitch, Kostenko, and every other Russian writer on Central Asia asserts is necessary to check the movement eastward, commencing 300 years ago in the reign of Ivan the Terrible, and continuing, under the impulse of irresistible forces, up to the present time. A desert, Russia has declared and England has admitted, is no barrier to an empire. Nomads can never be kept in check if they can retire to fastnesses hundreds of miles distant from the frontier guards. The only way to restrain them is to enclose the desert and put the barrier the other side. If this be done in the case of the great salt desert bordering Khorassan, the admission has to be made that there exists no other scientific frontier for Russia, south of the temporary line of the river Goorgan, than the Persian Gulf.

In a word, Russia, by annexing the region south of the Kopet Dagh to the course of the Atrek, and by again laying claim to the interfluvial country between the Atrek and the Goorgan, has robbed herself of the right to be regarded as an unfortunate empire

disinterestedly in search of a scientific frontier. There was nothing to provoke the annexation of the region between the Kopet Dagh wall and the river Atrek, except the absence of inhabitants; there was nothing to incite Russia to seize the Atrek-Goorgan zone, except the absence there of a firm administration: if these two conditions justify the seizure of territory, then Russia has ample right to rob the Shah of the greater part of his sparsely-populated and laxly-ruled dominions. While we admit the necessity of Russia annexing Akhal and Merv to crush the Turcoman scourge, we must insist that Russia cannot lay claim to having no ulterior designs of an aggressive and aggrandizing nature. Even before finally annexing Akhal she has seized two broad parallel strips of fertile territory to the south of the oasis! and if England continues to maintain her attitude of indifference, the whole of Khorassan must inevitably be absorbed. Already, in subjugating the Akhal Tekkes, she has imperilled Persian rule at Astrabad and Meshed; and violent indeed will be the break in an aggressive policy of 300 years' duration, if the conquest of Merv be not followed by an attempt to grasp Herat.

I deem it useless to advocate a policy which contains no elements of success. Akhal is lost; the northern bank of the Atrek and Goorgan is more or less beyond recovery. It is a waste of time urging any action in respect to these: better devote our attention to the endangered, but not yet forfeited, cities of Merv and Meshed.

By their attacks on Bokharan settlements, on Yomood camps in Khiva, and by their assistance to

their fellow-tribesmen of Akhal, the Tekkes of Merv have exposed themselves to Russian chastisement. Redress for outrages Russia has a right to demand, and if we cannot become responsible, directly or indirectly, for the good behaviour of the people of Merv, we have no standpoint for interference. Two practical courses are open to us, if we wish to step in between Russia and Merv: to push up to Herat, and appoint officers to keep the nomads in order, or, to aid Persia by generals and gold to resume her administration over the Moorgab region. Moral force, we may make up our minds at once, is useless in Asia unless backed up by the sword. A broad zone intervenes between Turkmenia and India. We must cross that zone if we wish to exercise efficacious influence over the Tekkes of Merv.

Were we at Herat we could easily throw a protectorate over the Turcomans, and detach them in time from their predatory pursuits. Of the two, they would sooner have an English protectorate than a Russian conquest. Geographically, Merv belongs to Afghanistan, not to Khorassan, and this itself is an argument in favour of keeping it from Russia. But England is too feebly led to-day to adopt such a heroic policy as an advance on Herat to save Merv from seizure. We only waste words, therefore, in arguing in favour of such a course, merely for the sake of the Tekkes; better far discuss the second alternative—a Persian protectorate.

This policy has many supporters, among them some of the most eminent Central Asian writers of the day. I myself do not approve of it, because I hold that it is no use giving Merv to a power that

cannot keep it. As a matter of fact, the policy is only advocated at all, because Central Asian writers know that England cannot be moved to action, and, in desperation, seize at anything that will defer the day of Russia's arrival at Merv. But what is the use of wasting English money on such a shiftless policy as this? Persia can never recover Merv, or maintain herself there, without the aid of English gold; and shall English gold be given to a despicable potentate who wears a Kouban-Cossack uniform, and carelessly allows Russia to annex slice after slice of Golden Khorassan?

No one can seriously assert that Persia is a progressive country. For centuries she has been decaying: her doom is nigh at hand. "Improvement in Khorassan," writes Colonel McGregor, "is impossible with the accursed Persian system of mingled tyranny and imbecility." What is true of Khorassan, is applicable to every part of Persia. The people are hardworking, though not of an estimable character; and under a European administration might become six millions of prosperous subjects. But the Government of Persia, always a curse to the people, is to-day as great an anachronism as the administration of the Porte in Turkey, or the Khedivite in Egypt. Under the cur dynasty of the Kurjars, the Empire of Persia has dwindled down to a country with a population less than that of Ireland. Her best provinces have been seized by Russia. The Caspian has become a Russian lake: the Atrek and Goorgan, Russian rivers. Azerbijan, Mazendran, Khorassan, each are coveted by Russia, and with their gradual seizure Persia will sink into the con-

dition of a petty Central Asian Khanate, and pass out of the category of the powers of the world.

Of course, as an English Imperialist, I would rather the future of Persia were otherwise, but it is impolitic to imitate Mr. Gladstone, and close one's eyes to the inexorable logic of disagreeable facts.* The evil of sustaining rotting empires has been too clearly exposed in the case of Turkey for England to be led astray a second time. Regret it however we may, we cannot but admit that the administrations, or maladministrations, of Persia and Turkey deserve no other fate than absolute extinction; and that statesman must be false indeed to the honour of England who gives his support to the fœtid spawn of Islamism—sensual cowardly Shahs, imbecile ministers, and cruel bloodthirsty pachas—and turns a deaf ear to the groans of a bitterly wronged humanity. Cruel is the fate that should have made England the protector of the accursed three—the Sultan, Shah, and Khedive—and Russia the champion of their wretched subjects. It is, perhaps, too late in the case of Turkey to successfully change the policy of a century, but our hands are still clear of complications with Persia. For years, owing to an ill-managed mission,† we have had no

* "I do not believe the Emperor of Russia is a man of aggressive schemes of policy. I have no fears myself of the territorial extensions of Russia in Asia—no fear of them whatever. I think such fears are only old women's fears."—Gladstone, November 27th, 1879. Surely Mr. Gladstone cannot have been unaware of Russia's annexations in the Atrek region when he was chanting this lofty creed.

† Ill managed in London. By rights Persia belongs to the sphere of Asiatic, not to European, diplomacy; the mission, therefore, should be composed of Indian officials, controlled by the India

policy at Teheran, and now that the question of Khorassan is looming on the horizon, let us be warned by our failure in Turkey to choose a course capable of honourably fulfilling every exigency of the future.

When we see people everywhere in Persia the victims of extortion and oppression, when whole districts falling into ruin meet our gaze on every side, when we find a polity prevailing that encourages swinish imbecility and relentlessly pursues the successful reformer to the grave—a polity, not only incapable of punishing border raiders, but also of protecting the lives and liberties of the Shah's subjects in the very heart of his dominions, when we fail to discern the slightest evidence of national progress, we must, indeed, be deaf to the voice of history if we imagine such a tottering government to be a fit protector and ruler for the turbulent Tekkes of Merv. Much though I oppose a Russian annexation of the Moorgab region, I would rather, a thousand times, see Russia supreme at Merv than Persia. There would then be a chance of civilisation reaching that distant region: under the Kurjar Shahs there could be no other prospect than a deepening of the desolation of death.

A Russian occupation of Merv being inevitable, and a Persian protectorate over the Tekkes inadmissible, we may pass on to observe the results that will attend the conquest of the "Queen of the

Office. When I was at the Foreign Office, Persia was treated with the utmost indifference and contempt; the barest courtesy was displayed towards her ambassador. It always struck me as being most impolitic that Count Schouvaloff—the representative of a hostile empire—should have been so warmly received at Downing Street, while Malcolm Khan experienced the coldest treatment.

World." The precedent of Akhal shows conclusively that Russia, on reaching Merv, cannot be expected to confine herself to the limits of the oasis. Her first step will naturally be to establish relations with Turkestan, by throwing a Cossack chain across the desert to Tchardjui, or Khoja Saleh; more probably to the latter point, as it marks the boundary of Afghanistan, and it would be ridiculous for Russia to leave unenclosed the small strip of desert between Tchardjui and Khoja Saleh, belonging to her quasi-subjects, the Ersari Turcomans. So far, we shall have no cause for complaint, although, as some of the Ersaris dwell on Afghan soil, we shall be compelled to take part in the delimitation of the frontier, and guarantee the good behaviour of the nomads on the Afghan side of the line. We cannot escape this complication, do what we can, unless we permit Russia to commence annexing Afghanistan. If the predatory tribes of the Hindoo Koosh raid against Russia's Ersaris, the Tsar will have a right to demand that we, or Abdurrahman, punish the offenders, or let the Cossacks do it. If the Ameer of Cabul cannot secure redress, we ourselves must; failing this, Russia will push up her border to the passes between Herat and Cabul, and occupy Maimene, Saripool, and Balkh. Here, again, she will be exposed to fresh tribal attacks, and so the game will go on till she touches Candahar or Quetta.

Two further movements may be expected after the conquest of Merv. "Circumstances beyond Russia's control" will draw her along the Moorgab towards Herat, and up the Heri Rood in the direction of Meshed. In conquering the Tekkes Russia will

naturally make herself mistress of the whole of their settlements; and the camps of the Sarik tribe at Youletan are so closely situated to these, that a miracle alone can save them from being included in the region annexed. The second group of settlements of the Sariks are disposed 75 miles higher up the Moorgab, where the river receives the waters of the Kooshk or Kara Tepe rivulet, rising within a few hours' ride of Herat. The Sariks and Tekkes are foes, and raid against each other. It is hardly to be expected that the Sariks will quietly give up in a day their predatory habits, and the fact of their camps lying just outside the border of Afghanistan must prove an irresistible temptation to the Russian Governor of Merv to punish their attacks on Russian subjects (*i.e.* on the subjugated Tekkes) by sending his Cossacks to Pendjdeh. In this manner the frontier will be brought up flush with the Paropamisus range. Between the crest of this range and Herat lie the settlements of the Djemshidi and Hazare tribes, subjects of Afghanistan. Both of these, according to Colonel Grodekoff, are accustomed to raid into Turkmenia, penetrating even to Merv itself. Is it probable that these forays will cease with the subjugation of the Tekkes? Is it a matter of likelihood that Abdurrahman Khan, if ever he conquers Herat from Ayoob, or the latter, if he retains his present precarious authority, will be better able than their immensely more powerful predecessor, Shere Ali, to restrain these tribes from raiding beyond the Afghan border? The proximity of the Cossack has never yet quelled the turbulence of the Central Asian nomad, and probably never will—it is only scientific subjuga-

tion that tames the border tribes into obedience to the dictates of the White Tsar. The presence of the Russians at Merv cannot be relied upon to put a stop to the raids of the Djemshidi of Kooshk. In all probability the incursions of the Herati tribesmen will continue as before. Two things will then occur: either we shall have to put a stop to their raiding, or else Russia will advance from Merv to do it for us, and the heights overlooking Herat will be occupied by the Cossack.

As regards the advance upon Meshed from Merv, a glance at the map and at Petroosevitch's writings will show, that between the Moorgab and the Heri Rood exists an unoccupied space, stretching almost up to Herat itself. The Russians, in advancing from Akhal to Merv, will probably delimit as the Persian frontier the line drawn by Petroosevitch as far as Sarakhs; and then, when the Moorgab is occupied as far as Pendjdeh, a natural desire will arise to annex the no-man's land lying in the angle between Persia and Afghanistan. Even if the Heri Rood be not crossed at all in quest of Persia's "real" frontier, this annexation will mean the insertion of a wedge between Herat and Meshed, and history tells us clearly enough what Russia has done in the past with territorial wedges. At the very least, the incorporation of the interfluvial district between the Moorgab and the Heri Rood will gag more tightly the fettered region of Khorassan. Russia's Cossack frontier posts will run three parts round it; from the Caspian *viâ* the Goorgan to Akhal, and thence to the Tedjend wells and round by the Heri Rood to some point eastward of Toorbet-e-Sheikh-e-Djam. South of

Khorassan the border is formed by the Great Salt Desert, severing the province from the rest of Persia. Across this vast waste communication is almost impossible. The intercourse between Khorassan and the Persian capital is maintained by two roads, running through the narrow fertile gullet between the Caspian at Astrabad and the desert at Shahrood. This connecting link between Meshed and Teheran —the other, *viâ* Khaf, along the Afghan frontier, and round the southern side of the desert to the capital, does not deserve mention—is so fragile, that it can never under Russian pressure be permanently maintained. The prospective frontier of Russia, after the conquest of Merv, will pass three parts round Khorassan and press against the province for 1,000 miles. The pressure of Persia, on the other hand, will be confined to the 80 miles intervening between Astrabad and Shahrood, and will, moreover, owing to the intermediate Elburz range, suffer from that fatal weakness that ever attends division. Khorassan alone can never resist such an unequal strain. The enormous pressure of Russia will break off the province from Persia at the neck.

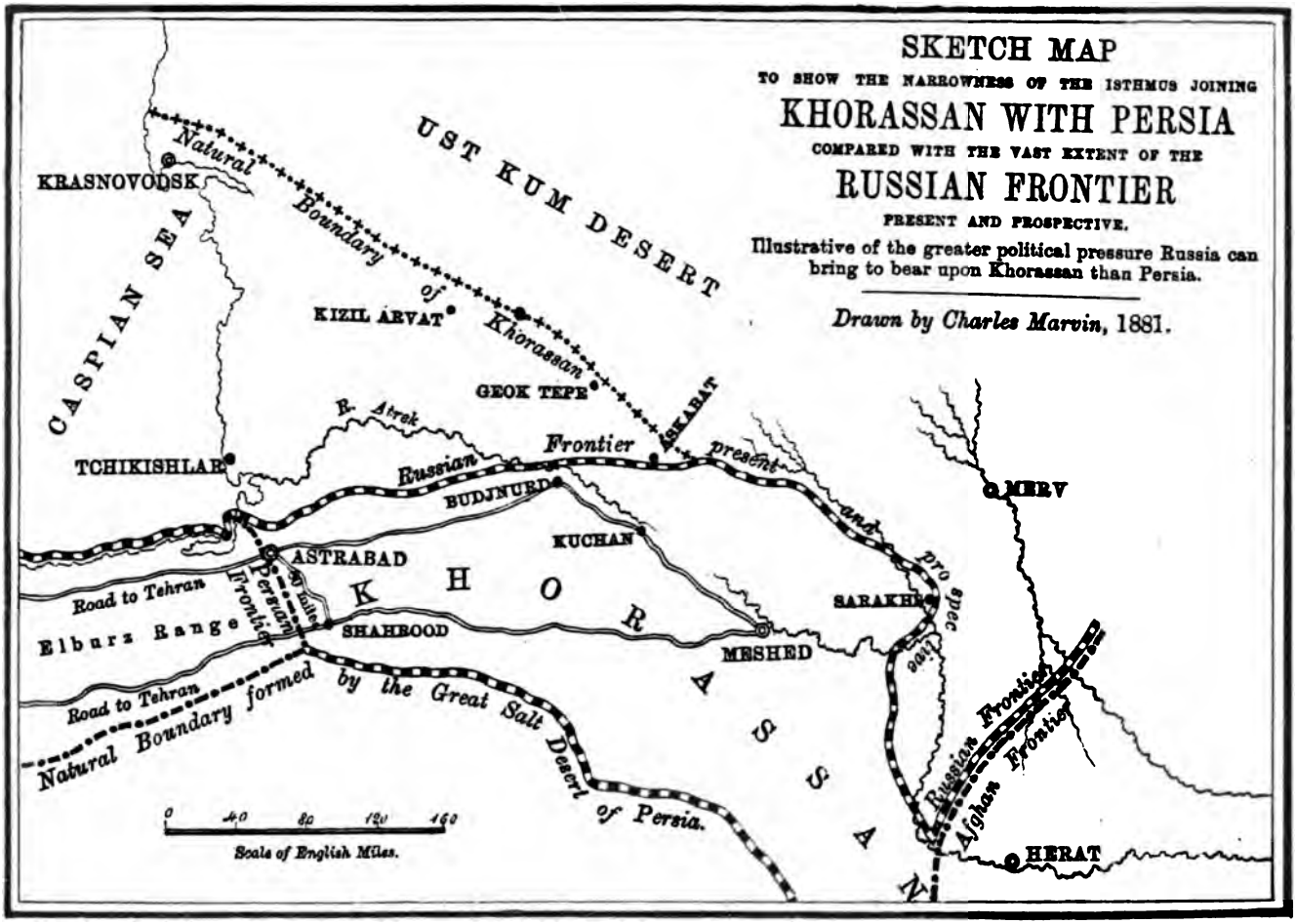
Hence, England cannot regard the occupation of Merv with indifference. It will not do for her to be lulled into a sluggard's slumber by the puerile prattle of the Duke of Argyll about the "folly" of "Mervousness," the "purity of Russian designs," the "worthlessness of a little oasis, with its ruined bazaar and black mud huts, and so forth." She must shake herself clear of such ignominious gammon. She must teach her statesmen to go back to their

books if India is to be saved from the spoiler.* There must be no reliance put in statesmen who would sacrifice the Empire to their party. Whether they be Liberals or Conservatives, Radicals or Home Rulers, they must be exposed if they falsify facts or deliberately suppress truths which clash with their political opinions. I, for one, favour with the Duke of Argyll a reconciliation with Russia. But it must be a reconciliation on equal terms. The concessions must not be all on the side of England. Russia must be taught to give as well as to take.

Our rulers must understand that Russia's friendship will be dearly bought if we timidly allow her to annex what she likes in Central Asia. It will be dearly bought, because it will not secure us her respect, and without that respect peace cannot be permanently retained. There must be no policy of poltroonery. Bluster will not do, and lick-spittling will not do. A plain word, at the proper moment, is what England urgently needs of her statesmen in their dealings with Russia.

Yes, the conquest of Merv is something more

* A Continental writer on Central Asia, whose knowledge of the region is not inferior to that of Rawlinson, said to me a few months ago, after a short residence in London :—"I am amazed at your political leaders. They all of them possess most positive opinions about Central Asia, but they really know nothing about it. Everyone has his views about Merv, but when I question them they have no idea of what Merv is like, where it is actually situated, and what relations the people have with Afghanistan. I have not met anyone yet, except Rawlinson, with a grasp of the Central Asian Question, based upon clear and accurate information. It is no use advising: your statesmen will not listen. It is no use writing books: they will not read them. The future of your Empire appears lost in the conflict of party—public opinion is of no avail. English statesmen never read, but always pass opinions: the public always read, but have no opinions to pass."


SKETCH MAP
TO SHOW THE NARROWNESS OF THE ISTHMUS JOINING
KHORASSAN WITH PERSIA
COMPARED WITH THE VAST EXTENT OF THE
RUSSIAN FRONTIER
PRESENT AND PROSPECTIVE.
Illustrative of the greater political pressure Russia can bring to bear upon Khorassan than Persia.
Drawn by Charles Marvin, 1881.
CASPIAN SEA
UST KUM DESERT
KRASNOVODSK
Natural Boundary of Khorassan
KIZIL ARVAT
GEOK TEPE
ASKABAT
R. Atrek
TCHIKISHLAR
Russian Frontier present and proposed line
BUDJNURD
KUCHAN
MERV
ASTRABAD
Road to Tehran
Persian Frontier
50 miles
KHORASSAN
Elburz Range
SHAHROOD
MESHED
SARAKHS
Road to Tehran
Natural Boundary formed by the Great Salt Desert of Persia.
Russian Frontier
Afghan Frontier
HERAT
0 40 80 120 160
Scale of English Miles.

than the annexation of a mere mid-desert oasis. It means the complete junction of the military forces of the Caucasus and Turkestan, itself a political fact of great magnitude. It means (with Akhal) the absorption of 100,000 of the best irregular cavalry in the world, at a week's march from the valley of Herat. It means the meeting, for the first time, of the Cossack and the Afghan, the Oxus boundary of Turkestan being safeguarded at present only by Bokharan horsemen. It means the complete incorporation of Khiva with the Russian empire, and the reduction of Bokhara from the independent position of a border state to the dependence of an incorporated province. It means the enclosure of 200,000 square miles of territory, and the addition to the Russian empire of a region as large as France. It means the completion of the conquest of the Central Asian deserts, and the commencement of the conquest of the great fertile mountain region of Persia and Afghanistan. It means the insertion of a strategical wedge between Meshed and Herat; it means the dissolution of Persian power in Khorassan; it means the first act of a drama, which can only conclude with the confronting of the Sepoy and the Cossack. It means the deliberate occupation of a strategical point, fraught with political entanglements of such a widespread nature, that whether Russia desire it or not, she will inevitably be led, unless forestalled by England, to Meshed, to Herat, to Balkh, and to Cabul. And she will not remain there. She will continue her swift advance until she triumphantly lays down her Cossack border alongside the Sepoy line of India.

"The conquest of Khiva will involve the subjugation of the Turcomans. Turkmenia will become a second Caucasus." These historical words of General Krijanovsky will derive a fresh significance with the successful occupation of Merv. "Turkmenia will become a second Caucasus," in the sense that Russia, from the base of the Turcoman capital at Merv, will be able to carve out another Batoum and Kars for herself from Meshed and Astrabad.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE KHORASSAN QUESTION,

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED THE MERV QUESTION.

PART II.—MESHED.

The direct road of invasion to India.—Russia's opinion of the power of England in India.—Absolute certainty of a future invasion.—Plans of conquest.—The expedition of 1878 to seize Herat.—Merv not in the path to India.—Gladstone's gammon.—Khruleff's plan of invasion annotated.—Description of the route from the Caspian to Candahar.—An account of the armies traversing it.—Kaufmann's wonderful march in 1880.—Russia's enormous progress in 25 years statistically displayed.—The annexations in Khorassan.—The Secret Treaty of May 31, 1878.—European colonists at Meshed.—Soboleff on the strategical value of Herat.—England's divine right to occupy Afghanistan.—Impossibility of maintaining a barrier between Russia and India.—The English Empire.—A plea for the amelioration of Party government.—England's best man for solving the Central Asian Question.

"On receiving Paul's project for assembling 70,000 troops at Astrabad, for invading India, Napoleon asked with a smile, 'How, when the combined army has assembled at Astrabad, will it penetrate to India, across a barren and almost savage country, a distance of 800 leagues?' 'The country,' answered the Emperor Paul, 'is not savage, it is not barren. It has long been traversed by open and spacious roads. The soil is like that of Arabia

and Libya—not covered with dry sand. Rivers water it at almost every step. There is no want of grass for fodder. Rice grows in abundance, and forms the principal food of the inhabitants.'"—*The Russians at Home and the Russians Abroad.*

It is a matter upon which most well-informed writers are agreed, that the best way for Russia to invade India is, *viâ* Astrabad, Meshed, Herat, and Candahar. This is not the place to discuss the prospects a Skobeleff would enjoy on reaching the Indus,—suffice it to define the route, and to lay down the general principle that, whether Russia be aggressively disposed to-day or not, she will inevitably seek to invade India next time a rupture occurs between the two Powers.

Writers are occasionally met with who sneer at the notion of a Russian invasion of India. Such writers belong to two categories: writers who do not mean what they say, and writers who do not know what they are talking about. Among the latter are commonly found men who argue the question from a purely English standpoint—as if Russia would be guided by impressions wholly different to those which she herself entertains of the feasibility of the enterprise! Theoretically, from a Russian point of view, nothing ought to be easier than the expulsion of the English from India. It is an opinion fatally widespread among Russians, even among such men as Grodekoff, Petroosevitch, and Skobeleff, that we oppress and cruelly extort money from the Hindoos. To such men, the notion of 80,000 Englishmen being able to keep down 250,000,000 natives on the approach of a Russian relieving army of 50,000 or

100,000 troops, is too ridiculous to be for a moment entertained. It is useless to attempt to argue Russians out of this entrancing belief. "You English are prejudiced," they say, tapping you smilingly on the shoulder. "You shop-keepers like to fancy you keep 250,000,000 people in order by the sight of your scales and yard-measures. You think it impossible for 50,000,000 Asiatic warriors—Sikhs and so forth—to rise against you and engulph your puny scattering of 80,000 men; you think this, though the snort of a Cossack pony in Central Asia sends a shudder throughout India. We will not deceive you. Make your money out of the Hindoos while you can; and," poking you pleasantly in the ribs and whispering in your ear, "just leave a drop or two of blood in the poor people till our Cossacks come and relieve them."

It is easy to say that the mind of Russia must be densely opaque if such is her impression of the instability of our power in India; yet, before we condemn her, are the usual English impressions of Russia herself any clearer? Assuredly, Russia will never invade India guided by English views of the difficulties of the enterprise, but by her own illusions —if they really are illusions—respecting the possibility of success. It is useless to say that Russia would never saddle herself with the suzerainty of India—the administrative maw of Russia is ready to swallow anything. It is ridiculous to urge that she has never harboured the thought of such a mighty enterprise—Peter's splendid schemes of conquest, Paul's plan of invasion, and the famous memorandum drawn up by General Khruleff during the Crimean

war, are against such an assertion; not to speak of the more recent proposals of Russian strategists, and the actual departure of three columns from Turkestan in 1878 for the purpose of stirring up the tribes in Afghanistan and occupying Herat.* Over and over again England has disinterestedly pointed out the immense difficulties attending a conquest of Akhal and Merv; yet has Russia ever listened to this friendly counsel? Our pretensions to argue her out of her plans of aggrandizement she pooh-poohs as the outpourings of insular minds. We are mere traders, she says, not soldiers; we are always a-thinking of pounds, shillings, and pence. In discussing an enterprise we do not regard the glory of it; we think only of the ultimate profit. If we fancy no profit can be derived from it, we hold it a virtue to relapse ignominiously into "masterly inactivity." With Russia the case is different. There, personal advancement can only be pursued through two channels—the army and the administration. The society that governs and leads is thus composed of soldiers and officials; the larger, lower strata of civilian land-owners, merchants, and peasants, exerting little or no influence over the course of political events. In such a community it is obvious that there will always be soldiers hungering for more glory, and officials hankering for fresh posts. Annexations only stimulate the craving for conquests, because every acquisition of fresh

* An account of this little campaign still remains to be written. The Tashkent column marched as far as Djam, on the Bokharan frontier; the Ferghana column penetrated to the Pamir, and the Khivan column advanced up the Oxus nearly to Tchardjui. The united force was not large, but it was sufficiently powerful to have done a deal of mischief, aided by the Heratis and Afghans.

subjects means an increase to the army, a further development of the civil service of Russia, with the inevitable result, in course of time, of an augmented growth of redundant soldiers and functionaries. "More glory, more appointments," is the cry of Russian society; "more money," the motto of society in England. It is natural that the Russian aspect of the invasion of India should thus be widely different to that of England; and our statesmen will be foolish indeed if they trust to English arguments to deter the Cossacks from ever attempting the spoliation of the Indies.

The public have been accustomed to be informed by Russophiles that impenetrable deserts separate Russia from India; that gigantic ranges of mountains, infested by the cruellest of tribes, bar the way of an invading army; and that food and forage must be brought from enormous distances to feed the invading force. Such talk as this may apply, in a measure, to Turkestan, but it is, in every detail, fatally false when associated with an invasion from the Caspian Sea. The Duke of Argyll thought he made a glorious hit a year or two ago when, in imagination, he led a Russian army up the Atrek desert, along the Akhal oasis, across the Tedjend sands, up the Moorgab wastes, and across the Paropamisus sheep-tracks to Herat—as if Russia was bound to take this roundabout route, *as if she had not already annexed territory preparing the way for a shorter cut*, as if there did not exist a great highway—the highway of ages—leading from Astrabad to Herat, through one of the most favoured regions in the world. Had the Duke of Argyll taken the trouble to read even such an old

author as Baillie Fraser, and studied the elementary principles of Russian policy and Russian strategy, he would never have put forth a series of statements ridiculous and wrong from beginning to end.

No; our statesmen must not shut themselves up in a fool's paradise. They must not take maps and draw fancy routes through impassable places and say, "Lo! no army can pass across here," when within a canter of the deserts are delightful valleys, affording 100,000 soldiers every sustenance a general could desire. There must be no setting up of puppets, for party purposes, for the pleasure of knocking them down. It will not do for them to exclaim, "I *don't* believe, and I *won't* believe, that Russia is annexing territory in Asia," when her generals are slicing up Khorassan as fast as ever they can. They must be denounced as traitors to the Empire if they refuse to take precautions against an invasion of India, when every Russian strategist has his own pet scheme of conquest, and when every Russian governor in Central Asia is tearing down the barriers that intervene, in order that when the next war takes place between the two powers—and can even Gladstone assure us that there *never* will be war?—an effort may be made to fling us out of India.

Let us calmly annotate General Khruleff's plan of invasion in 1856, drawn up at a time when Russia was supposed to know little or nothing about Persia and Afghanistan, and when she had not yet subjugated the Caucasus (she has an available army there to-day of 150,000 men), nor yet established any hold upon the East Caspian coast.

"The road from Ak Kala to Candahar offers no

difficulties." Ak Kala is a ruined Persian town 15 miles from Astrabad, and 40 miles from the mouth of the navigable river Goorgan. O'Donovan says it marks the "practical frontier of Persia," which coincides with Petroosevitch's views as to the Russian border passing along the opposite bank of the Goorgan. Ak Kala can be made to drain the region between the Atrek and Goorgan, of which O'Donovan writes, that "it consists of a vast tract of wonderfully fertile ground, capable of irrigation, and pretty thickly populated." There exists no need to make use of sickly Tchikishlar or waterless Krasnovodsk for a base, when the mouth of the Goorgan affords every facility for the concentration of a vast army. Be it remembered that a complete water-way exists between the Baltic and the Caspian; and that a goodly proportion of the 750 steamers on the Volga and its affluents could be drawn to the Caspian if needed. Only this year, several large steam transports have been ordered abroad, to be sent in the summer from the Neva to the Caspian. Only recently material for the railway to Akhal has been conveyed from Odessa to Tsaritsin by railroad, and conveyed thence by barge to Michaelovsk. If Russia has seemed slow in conducting the Turcoman campaign to a termination, it must be remembered that she has been hampered for a year by the daily possibility of a war with China and with Turkey, and has thus given assistance grudgingly to Skobeleff.

The province of Astrabad in general, and the mouth of the Goorgan in particular, affording a good base for the concentration of Russia's vast resources, let us examine the road thence to Candahar, which, Khruleff

says, "presents no difficulties." In the Appendix will be found Petroosevitch's account of the "best" road from Astrabad to Meshed. He states that it is "fit for vehicular traffic throughout," and that it is abundantly supplied with water and fuel, and food and forage. From Meshed to Herat the road has been traversed by Persian armies and numerous travellers, whose records leave on the mind no impression of insuperable obstacles along the route; and from Herat to Candahar, Ayoub Khan has only recently marched with a force of all arms, including at least thirty pieces of artillery.

Khruleff's assertion is thus an accurate one. He continues: "From Ak Kala to Candahar the road is practicable for artillery and a good commissariat train; water, rice, barley, and sheep can be procured in plenty. The grazing-land is good. The expeditions of Shah Mahomed have shown that some tens of thousands of soldiers, totally unprovided for, have found provisions on the road through Budjnurd, Kuchan, Meshed, and Herat. Captain Blaramberg, of our service, participated in one of these campaigns, and in the siege of Herat, when it was defended by Lieutenant Pottinger, of the English army. The siege of Herat was in 1838. From Meshed to Herat we should find easy means of transport, on account of the great concentration of caravans at Meshed. The country round Herat is famous for its fertility. From Ak Kala the Russian troops would reach Herat in 35 days, marching 25 versts (about 18 miles) a day."*

* In the spring of this year Kaufmann marched at the head of a column from Tashkent to Kuldja, 975 miles, in two months; being at the rate of nearly 19 miles a day, allowing one day in seven, or

When we find a Persian army of 20,000 men and 30 cannon marching successfully from Teheran to Herat past Astrabad in 1837, and an Afghan army of the same strength, and with the same force of artillery, advancing in 1880 from Herat to Candahar, to which point a British army had already more than once penetrated from the Indus, it is really too nonsensical to attempt to make any one, not a fool or a lunatic, believe that a Russian army cannot invade India from the Caspian Sea.

Khruleff continues: "The march of the English troops into Afghanistan has shown, that whilst coming as enemies their army was supplied with forage by the natives. We may be perfectly sure that we should encounter no difficulty in the matter of supplies. The road from Herat to Candahar, the gate of India, is known to us, and thus having secured the neutrality of Persia" (the Shah is a puppet of Russia to-day), "and having made ourselves secure on the side of Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokan" (all these states have been occupied since Khruleff's words were written, and Russia is now advancing on Merv), "we could at once march 30,000 troops to Candahar, excite the antipathy of the Afghans to the English, and shake the power of the English in India."

Thirty thousand troops is a moderate calculation, but Khruleff observes that "a numerous force would

eight throughout, for a stoppage for rest. Mr. Delmar Morgan, visiting Kuldja as an explorer of the Lob Nor region on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society, saw the column arrive at its destination, and would not believe the rapidity of the march until shown the march-route of the detachment.

be embarrassing; we should endeavour to raise a native force, our own should form the reserve." Khruleft's plan of conquest was prepared under the impression that Khorassan would afford only a neutral passage to the Russian troops; but let us suppose Khorassan annexed to Russia, and the enterprise becomes at once immensely more feasible. The population of Khorassan is not less than two millions, with no feeling of attachment to Persia. Such a population could easily furnish, under the conscription system, 100,000 men, and should the Perso-Afghan frontier at Kareez-Koosan become the Russo-Afghan frontier, this force could be assembled within four days' march of Herat. We have already seen that in conquering Merv, Russia will become the possessor of 100,000 cavalry. We have already pointed out that the army of the Caucasus consists of at least 150,000 troops, and that the Caspian drains an empire controlling an army of three million soldiers. It does not do, therefore, to jeer and to sneer, and, *for party purposes*, to ridicule the possibility of an invasion of India. I write this, not in an alarmist spirit, for I am not a Russophobist, and have no belief in Russian bogeys; but in order that we may seriously set our empire in the East in order, and not let it remain loosely jointed until the hour of danger comes.

We must never forget that Russia is a growing empire, a progressive empire. I myself have such faith in its future, that were I a German or a Frenchman, I should throw aside my nationality and become a Russian subject. Twenty-five years ago, when Khruleff submitted to Prince Dolgoroukoff, the

Minister of War, his plan for the "expedition to Afghanistan, to overthrow English rule in India," the population of Russia was only 65 millions. To-day it is 95 millions. Then, she had only 5 millions of subjects in Asia: to-day she has 15 millions. Her exports in 1855 amounted to 169,688,130 poods,* her imports to 151,686,800 poods. In 1879 they amounted respectively to 619,165,684 poods and 595,582,192 poods. When the Tsar ascended the throne, only 5,000 national schools existed: there are now 25,000. The production of coal in 1855 was 8,666,574 poods: in 1879, upwards of 111,000,000 poods. Then, the coal-beds of South Russia had not been scratched: to-day, they are being opened up everywhere, and, above all, in the Donetz valley, where there is a possible annual supply of 100,000,000 tons for 200 years. In 1855 there were only 184 steamers in all Russia, with a collective strength of 13,519 horse-power: in the spring of 1880 there were 1,056, with 80,890 horse-power, of which 426 were on the Volga alone. Then, there were only 879 versts of railroad: now, the network exceeds 20,000 versts (15,000 miles). Since Khruleff penned his scheme the locomotive, in his day barely arrived at Moscow, has traversed the Urals to Siberia, the Volga to the Kirghiz steppes of Orenburg, the frosty Caucasus to Baku. Russia, at the close of the Crimean war, had under arms only 800,000 troops. Russia, when hostilities seemed imminent with England in May, 1878, had assembled 42,000 officers and 1,788,677 men. In 1855 a broad zone separated Russia from India; the Khirgiz deserts were as yet untraversed;

* A pood is 36 lbs.: $62\frac{1}{2}$ poods go to the ton.

Bokhara, Khiva, and Khokand were hostile states; the Caucasus simmered with insurrection, and required an army alone to keep the tribes from sweeping away the Cossacks. All these barriers are gone. The Kirghiz, completely pacified, are being converted into Cossacks; a Russian garrison preserves order in Khiva and menaces Merv; obedient Bokhara maintains an army of 20,000 men to swell the military power of the Tsar in Asia; Russian gunboats cruise on the classic waters of the Oxus, and pay flying visits to Afghan towns; Russian staff officers roam freely through Afghan Balkh and Badakshan, while Englishmen are kept to the south of the Hindoo Koosh—nay, are unable even to visit Cabul. In the Caucasus tribes, free in 1855 but conquered since, furnish troops to subjugate the independent states beyond. Stalwart Daghestanis, who, in 1855, defied the encroaching power of Russia, now march gladly across the Balkan steppe to conquer the Tekkes of Merv. The Turkish frontier no longer cramps Transcaucasia: Russia to-day spreads out her sway to Kars—the key of Armenia—and to Batoum, whence a railway will shortly run to the Persian frontier. In the interval of 25 years the population of Persia, by famine and other causes, has dwindled away by a million; the Shah has become completely a Russian tool. English prestige in 1855, still powerful in Khorassan, has passed into a jest to-day in the caravanserais of Meshed. With such evidences of Russian progress and Russian aggrandizement, is it too much to predict that ere the dawn of the 20th century, the power of the Tsar will be supreme in Meshed, supreme in Khorassan?

But the Shah will never consent to the conquest of his finest province, the reader may exclaim. What are the facts? Speaking of the Budjnurd district in 1873, Colonel Baker said: "The Shah is apparently willing to see this, the finest part of Persia, occupied by Russia; and England stands by, and from a want of geographical knowledge is unaware that the spoliation is being accomplished, and imagines that Russia is only occupying forts in the desert, instead of a fertile and most important part of the Persian frontier." In subsequent years the Russians repeatedly passed through Kari Kala without the Shah complaining of the violation of Persian territory. In 1878 a map was published by the Russian Government, excluding from Persia the whole of the region between the Atrek and the Kopet Dagh.* A year later, when Mr. O'Donovan ventured to remark to the Russians at Tchat, that Europe drew the Persian frontier thence to Kizil Arvat, the officers of Lomakin's staff laughed at the idea, and claimed as Russian territory the whole of the right bank of the Atrek to the river's source. Nor was this their only claim. At Tchikishlar he was calmly assured that the Goorgan was the virtual frontier of Persia. This was not a new pretension, nor yet a theoretical assumption. The Russian consul at Astrabad had made it to Colonel Baker in 1873. Russia herself had asserted it practically only a few months before Baker's arrival, when Markozoff had crossed the Atrek and seized, for the Khivan expedition, camels

* A fac-simile of this is given in the *Disastrous Campaign*.

belonging to Persian Turcomans, grazing on the Goorgan flats in sight of the fort of Ak Kala, 15 miles from Astrabad. Since then Russia has repeatedly treated the Goorgan as the boundary. We have seen what Petroosevitch has said about the river. While he was penning his statement, the Russian garrison at Tchat were pasturing their herds on the southern side of the Atrek. In the spring of 1880 the Russians seized 5,000 camels belonging to Persian Turcomans encamped between the Atrek and the Goorgan. When the nomads complained to the Persian governor of Astrabad, the latter pooh-poohed the grievance, and told them to obey the Russians. In May, 1880, the Russians seized 50 Goklans from the camps between the Atrek and Goorgan, and sent them to Baku as hostages for the good behaviour of the tribe—a purely Persian one. No wonder when O'Donovan visited Gömush Tepe, near the mouth of the Goorgan, the people asked him if he knew whose subjects they were—they themselves could not tell whether they belonged to Persia or Russia!

At Astrabad, the Special Correspondent of the *Daily News*—a hardy hater of the Turks and a friend of the Russians—found the Persian governor to be in the pay of Russia. Elsewhere in his journey through the border states he saw the functionaries wearing Russian medals, and the houses of the rulers adorned with Russian gifts.* We have already

* "The number of articles of Russian manufacture—articles of luxury of great value—show that in frontier relations the Russians have not been forgetful of those little social amenities in the shape of presents so conducive to a mutual good feeling. This is a universal Russian custom under similar circumstances; and in this case seems to have thoroughly attained its object. In fact, it seems

noted the feeling at Meshed, which McGregor found to be "favourable to Russia," and Ogorodnikoff, "one of desire for emancipation from the Shah." With such concurrent testimony of the friendly feeling of the people and their local rulers towards Russia, and their antipathy to the dynasty at Teheran, the sway of the Shah in Khorassan cannot really be long-lived.

Persia's policy is so ambiguous, and such little prudence is commonly displayed in guiding the affairs of Oriental nations, that the writer who would pick the silliest course a monarch could pursue, would probably be as successful in discovering the secret plans of the Shah as a wily envoy plenipotentiary. O'Donovan hints at a secret Russo-Persian understanding, with ulterior designs beyond the conquest of the Tekkes. This may mean the seizure of Herat for Persia, or it may mean anything else. Anyone can solve for themselves the riddle. The only light I can throw upon the matter, is simply what has flashed upon me in penning this paragraph. No longer will I keep undisclosed a foolish document, damaging England's most vital interests

to me that the Russian officials charged with conducting frontier policy in this part of the world thoroughly understand their mission, and that in Central Asia the Russian Government has the game all in its own hands. So 'benevolent' is Persia's neutrality that, as far as she is concerned, Russia may do pretty much what she pleases along the frontier in dealing with the Tekkes, and meets with every facility she may stand in need of in so doing. I am much inclined to believe what I have on more than one occasion heard hinted at, that in all this Akhal-Tekke and Merv affair there is a secret, thorough understanding between the Russian and Persian Governments; and the understanding may possibly go much farther than the annihilation of a handful of border barbarians."—Letter from Kuchan, *Daily News*, October 28, 1880.

in the East. By the Secret Treaty of May 31st, 1878 (see *Our Public Offices*, page 278), the Tsar solemnly bound himself never to extend the Russian frontier in Asia Minor. We all know what a Russian diplomatic promise is. Is it possible Persia is relinquishing Khorassan in return for becoming the Sultan's heir, or one of his heirs, in Asia Minor. With Persia as a Russian puppet on the Euphrates, the treaty would be observed in the letter, if broken in the spirit; and English diplomacy would be defeated once more, as it has always been by Russia in the past.

Whether this be correct or not, the fact remains that Golden Khorassan—the Country of the Sun—is rapidly becoming a Russian possession, and that the best road to India is already marked out for seizure. Along that route three great cities mark the way—Meshed, Herat, and Candahar. Of Meshed it may be said, in the words of McGregor, that the surrounding district is a "splendid country, with climate and soil suitable for European colonization"; and that, under Russian rule, it would probably become a second Tashkent or Tiflis. With an area as large as Great Britain, Khorassan should be able to afford sustenance for twenty times the population she contains to-day. Of this population, the city of Meshed would naturally be the administrative centre.

Of the second city, Herat, so much to the purpose has just been written by Colonel Malleson, that I myself will say nothing about it. Englishmen are occasionally met with who question the strategic value of the city, but I have never encountered in the course of my Russian reading and travels, any Russian disposed to speak lightly of the place.

Among his countrymen Colonel L. Soboleff, an officer of Turkestan experience, and now on the staff of the official organ of the Etat Major, the *Rooski Invalide*, holds a high position as a writer on Central Asian subjects. In that capacity he has contributed, since 1878, a series of critical articles on Afghan affairs; and this is what he declared some weeks before Malleson's book came out:—"And really it may be said, that in all Central Asia, and even in all Southern Asia, there is nowhere a more important point, from a military aspect, than Herat—the Key of India. Asia Minor, the Caucasus, Persia, Turkestan, Afghanistan, and India—all are bound together by this city. Its province is distinguished for its wealth in corn, capable of feeding an army of 100,000 men with its train. The transport of such an army, which would be enormous, could be furnished from the local resources. Through Herat runs the sole route from the Caspian adapted for the easy march of a vast army. Between it and India there are no natural obstacles to arrest the invader. Reaching Candahar, an invading army has its choice of several routes for forcing the mountains beyond, and of these, that through the Bolan offers the greatest convenience to a commander."*

Respecting Candahar I need say but little. Its value has been well proclaimed to the world by English and Russian strategists, and did we possess a Government conscious of Russia's game in Asia, and desirous of frustrating it, the city would have

* Soboleff would probably be acquainted with the Secret Military Report which Colonel Grodekoff—the latest European officer who has visited Herat—presented to the Etat Major on his return to Russia.

been annexed months ago. Holding, as I do, that the occupation of Herat should be the key-stone of our policy in the East, and that without the entry of the English into Herat, we can never obtain a basis for the solution of the Central Asian Question consistent with the interests of our empire, the annexation of Candahar to me seems a point too trivial for discussion. But I may say a word or two to dispose, once for all, of the argument that we are foreigners in Afghanistan, and that we have no right to trample the patriot tribes beneath our feet. As Englishmen, living in a homogeneous country, it is difficult for us to realise a state composed of dissonant elements held together by the frailest of ties. We see on the map four irregular coloured lines, enclosing the dominions of the late Ameer Shere Ali, and we at once assume that the people of Candahar and Balkh, and of Herat and Cabul, are possessed with the same common spirit of patriotism that animates London and Liverpool, Plymouth and Aberdeen. But such an assumption is as false to facts as it is fatal to the interests of our empire. The people of Candahar, as has been repeatedly pointed out, have no sympathy with the Ameer at Cabul; and were the city granted a free municipal government, it would rejoice in the presence of an English frontier guard between it and Herat, or at Herat itself. Of Herat, we have the testimony of every traveller that the subjugated city hates its Afghan masters; that it sighs for its lost independence; that its people entertain the friendliest feelings towards the English. Here, again, the city would not regret its separation from the destinies of Ayoob or Abdurrahman, and would rejoice

in municipal freedom, restoring order and peace to the land. Of Afghan-Turkestan—the strategical strip between the Hindoo Koosh and the Oxus, containing the Uzbek states of Maimene, Saripool, Balkh and Koondooz—we have the solemn testimony of Grodekoff himself that the people groan under the yoke of the Afghans, and long for their deliverance from a rule which was only imposed on them by force a few years ago, by English cannon and English rifles presented by shiftless, short-sighted Viceroys to the Ameer Shere Ali. Over and over again the Uzbeks sorrowfully demanded of Grodekoff when Russia or Abdurrahman Khan was coming to deliver them from the cruelty and the extortion of the savage Afghans; the people trusting Abdurrahman might some day come, drive out the Afghans, and establish an independent Uzbek state, distinct from the Ameerdom of Cabul. Abdurrahman *has* come, but there has been no deliverance from the Afghan yoke: the people are no better treated now than they were in the time of Shere Ali. If we must govern our empire by the purest of sentimental principles, we have no other course than to say to Abdurrahman Khan—We cannot help you to keep down the Uzbeks, clamouring for their freedom; we cannot give you any longer the moral support that sustains your tyrannic rule beyond the Hindoo Koosh—; and it is the duty of Mr. Gladstone * to say the words at once, without expending all his purity of principle on Turkey. But empires have never been raised or maintained by sentimental

* As I write this, there are reports of a rising at Balkh against Abdurrahman, whose rule in Afghan-Turkestan has, from the outset, been as merciless as Shere Ali's!

principles alone, and never will. The exigencies of progress demand that sacrifices should be made. And what well-balanced mind is that, that can assert that the Uzbeks beyond the Hindoo Koosh should rather sacrifice themselves to the misrule of cruel, treacherous, and barbarous Afghans, than to the administration of humane and Christian England. Is the preservation of the power of the Ameer of greater necessity to humanity than the preservation of the largest empire in the world—an empire with which are connected, not the ephemeral interests of a scattering of Cabuli tribes, but the interests of countless ages? No; the truth must be told: we have quite as much right as Abdurrahman to rule Candahar, and Herat, and the three cities that guard the passes of the Hindoo Koosh—Saripool, Balkh, and Maimene.

It will not do to attempt, in a mud-pie fashion, to build up a solid, independent state in Afghanistan. Russia will never allow it, and Russia's power of disintegration in Central Asia is infinitely stronger than our power of creation, when that power is applied to the creation of fragile structures that experience tells us can never survive a shock. The age of barrier states is past. The age of giant empires, growing side by side, frontier against frontier, is at hand. For years, Russia has been aiming at the dissolution of the feeble barriers separating her empire from our own. With the conquest of Merv she will complete the hardest portion of the task. There will then remain only Afghanistan between the Sepoy and the Cossack. This barrier nature has marked out for us to break down. Do what we can, we can never prevent the inevitable junction of the

Russian and English frontiers in Asia. It would be difficult to do so even with Russia's help. It is impossible without it. The main principle of General Kaufmann's policy to-day is, to level the rotten barrier of Afghanistan and bring the two empires side by side. It is a policy possessing every element of success. I candidly confess it has my heartiest sympathy.

It is intolerable that a handful of Cabulis should prohibit intercourse between Turkestan and India; it is more intolerable that the prohibition should be fostered by ourselves. Do we profit by it? Is India rendered the more secure? Not even the most bigoted parochialist dare utter, Yes. The Oxus, which nature has marked as the boundary of the two empires, is already claimed as a Russian river. Pretensions are even put forth to the future suzerainty of Saripool, Maimene, and Balkh; and if we only wait till Skobeleff enters Merv and posts Cossacks on the Paropamisus ridge, we shall have to accept, at the dictation of Russia, *her* delimitation of the two empires, with the dishonourable drawback of having to cede the best of the India-menacing points to her—as the Power in possession. Since the junction of the frontiers of the two empires must some day take place; since we know that on the occasion of the next war between the two powers, Russia will attempt to strike at our empire through India; since we have evidence beyond dispute that there exists an easy road of invasion *viâ* Astrabad, Meshed, and Herat—is it too much to demand of the rulers of our empire that they arrange at once our border line in Central Asia? Is it too

much to ask of thinking Englishmen, that they shall individually do their utmost to preserve their empire from the madness of "masterly inactivity," and from the poltroonery of a counter-policy consisting of arrogant bluster in words and ignominious concession in deeds?

I speak strongly, for I speak inspired. We possess a larger empire than Russia. We rule the richest parts of the earth, while Russia controls the poorest. We govern a population nearly four times larger than that under the sway of the Tsar. The Sea is our own. The most powerful state in Asia gives an Imperial title to our Queen. We have a growing empire in America, another in South Africa, a third in Australasia. Our resources are so vast that, directed by a master hand, they could establish the universal dominion of the English. In money, in men fitted by nature for conquest, in the manufactures and commerce that give force to military empires, we surpass, not only Russia, but all Europe.

Possessing these illimitable resources, we, nevertheless, allow our Gladstones and our Beaconsfields to pursue a foreign policy which, from the exigencies of faction, ever oscillates between puerility and poltroonery.

If Englishmen were but a fraction as faithful to their empire as they are to their party, there would be no long-drawn Eastern Questions, no interminable differences between Russia and England—disastrous to the former Power, disgraceful to the latter. Yes, we wrong ourselves quite as much by our idolized faction form of government as Russia wrongs us by her broken promises and diplomatic wiles. Is the

ingenuity of the world exhausted? Is there no better form of popular government conceivable, than that which divides a nation into two hostile halves, each more loyal to party chiefs and party principles than to the interests of their empire? Must we always have discussion and division, and never decisive action?

Casting back one's memory five-and-twenty years, can any Englishman solemnly allege that the Central Asian Question has ever been treated by alternate Governments and Parliaments with that anxious solicitude, which men give to their own private interests? There have been, God knows, discussions enough, and professions of policy enough, but decisive action has always been left to Russia. Is it impossible for the public to take the matter into its own hands, and insist on a settlement of the Central Asian Question before we meddle any more with the affairs of Turkey? Constantinople is not on the road of invasion to India: Merv, Meshed, Herat control the avenues of Russia's advance. Let us sacrifice, like men of business, the smaller interest to the greater one; let us make ourselves secure on the confines of India ere we meddle with a ruined structure that, in falling, may rattle down our supremacy in Asia like a pack of cards.

"Masterly inactivity"* will do well for our colonial policy, because our colonies are self-governing, and can shift for themselves. But in India, where

* Consistent admirers of Lord Lawrence are bound to support an annexation of Afghanistan. His lordship deprecated an invasion of the country, but, being there, he maintained that we should never turn our backs upon it again. It is useless to argue now whether the invasion was right or wrong. We are in Afghanistan to-day. The second clause of his counsel now comes into play: "We ought never to turn our backs on it again."

we maintain control by the sword, we must never leave a loop-hole for foreign invasion, for the accumulation at Candahar or Herat of one of those colossal armies which an absolute ruler of 3,000,000 soldiers can collect there, aided by patience and time; and which, save by conscription, we can never in any way expect to approach in numbers. Since there must be a scientific frontier to India, let it be the best. Let us advance and take it before Russia robs us of our chance. The task should not be a difficult one, with good troops and *good* generals. Afghanistan should not be difficult or costly to govern, if we give it over to an able administrator. Properly managed, it should soon repay the cost of occupation. Healthy homes could be found in abundance in the rich and delightful valley of Herat, for the English troops who pine and perish along the present unwholesome frontier of India.*

To select the border line between the English and Russian empires in Asia, there should be no appointment of committees or commissions. The task should be given to a single man. In the multitude of counsel there may be wisdom, but rarely, if ever, decision. It is with public affairs as with private: one man will always carry out a scheme more quickly, more cheaply, and more satisfactorily than a committee of a dozen. You have the advantage of aggregate wisdom in confiding a task to a committee: you have the drawback of their aggregate foolishness. Even if you are lucky in securing a choice selection of sages, experience warns you

* Compare the pestilential post at Peshawur with travellers' accounts of the climate of Herat.

beforehand that, the more their originality the greater will be the conflict of opinion, which can only end in a compromise—a term signifying feebleness of decision.

No; we should choose a good man for the solution of the Anglo-Russian Frontier Question; we should allow him to choose his own advisers; we should give him abundance of time to form his own opinions on the subject. He should have unlimited funds to conduct explorations, and to appoint assistant explorers. He should visit in succession Russia and Persia, to realise correctly the genius of those countries. He should have absolute freedom in the preparation of his plan; and the plan, when complete, should be made the basis of a definite and final settlement of the Central Asian Question.

I may be asked to point out the Atlas who can bear this enormous responsibility upon his shoulders. We have not to go far to seek him. His name is well known. He is not the offspring of a clique; he is not the creature of a faction. He has fought well; he has ruled well. His Christian piety is a proverb among those who know him; his scorn of pelf and preferment is so remarkable that he almost stands alone—he hardly belongs to a place-hunting, money-grubbing generation. He possesses the entire confidence of all parties; he enjoys the admiration and love of the nation. Russia knows nothing to his detriment; and he has recently earned her respect by his disinterested exertions on her behalf in the distant East. I have no need to utter his name. It springs spontaneously to the reader's lips—"CHINESE" GORDON.

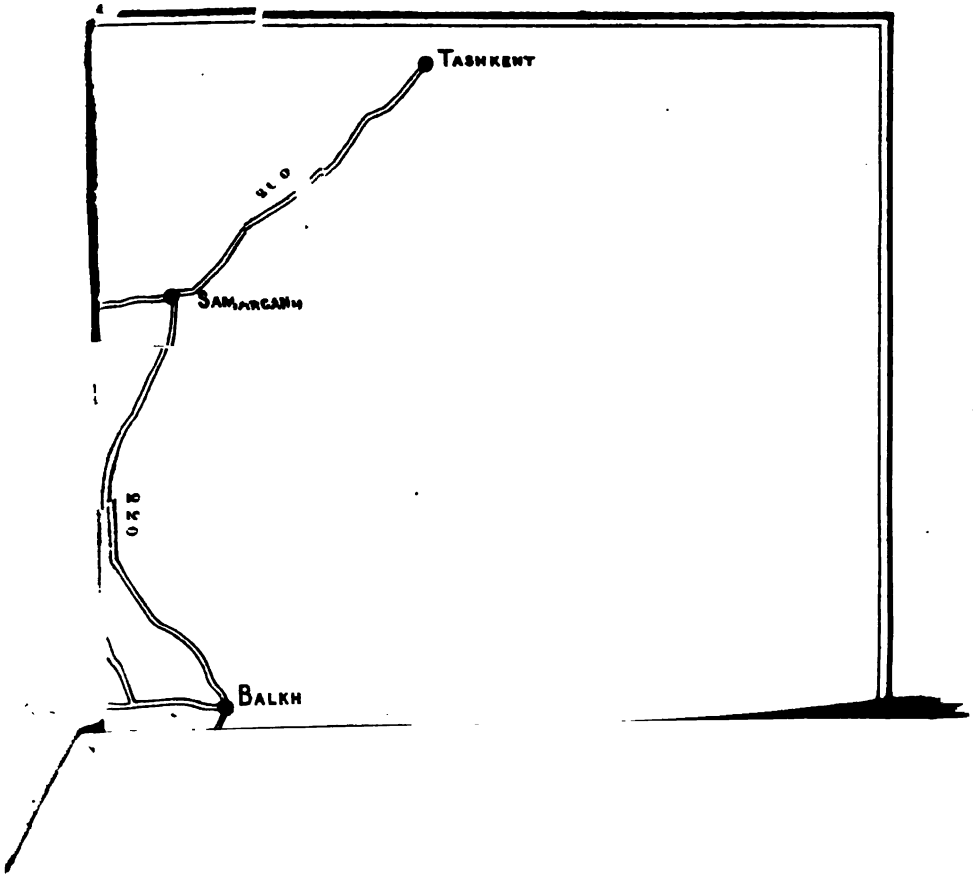
CHAPTER XX.

THE STORMING OF GEOK TEPÉ.

Skobeleff's appointment to the Transcaspian command.—March from Fort Douz Oloum.—Bami fortified.—Reconnaissance of Geok Tepé.—The autumnal raids.—Sanguinary action near Kazantchik.—The campaign commences.—Occupation of Samoursk.—Kourapatkin's ride from Samarcand to Geok Tepé.—Battle of December 24th.—Storming of Yangi Kala.—Sorties from Dengeel Tepé.—Reconnaissance by Petroosevitch.—Laying the first parallel.—Petroosevitch killed.—Terrible losses.—Second parallel laid.—A sortie.—Third parallel laid.—Bombardment of the aoul.—The camp moved.—Sanguinary conflicts.—A truce to bury the dead.—Springing the mines.—Storming and capture of the aoul.—Comparison of losses.—More men killed at Geok Tepé than in all previous sieges and battles in Central Asia.—Occupation of Askabat.—The oasis of Akhal conquered.—Corpulent complacency of the Duke of Argyll.—A mendacious statement.

"The opinion is, that Russia has made great advances in Central Asia. As a matter of fact, that is not true. Since the days of 1868 and 1869, when Russia conquered Bokhara, there has been no advance that can be compared with that conquest."—DUKE OF ARGYLL, January 28th, 1881.

"If the Russians are about to occupy Merv, of which they make no secret; if they have an easy road to Herat, which is a fact well known, and a fortress there before them in a fertile country held by a people without


TASHKENT
SAMARCAND
BALKH

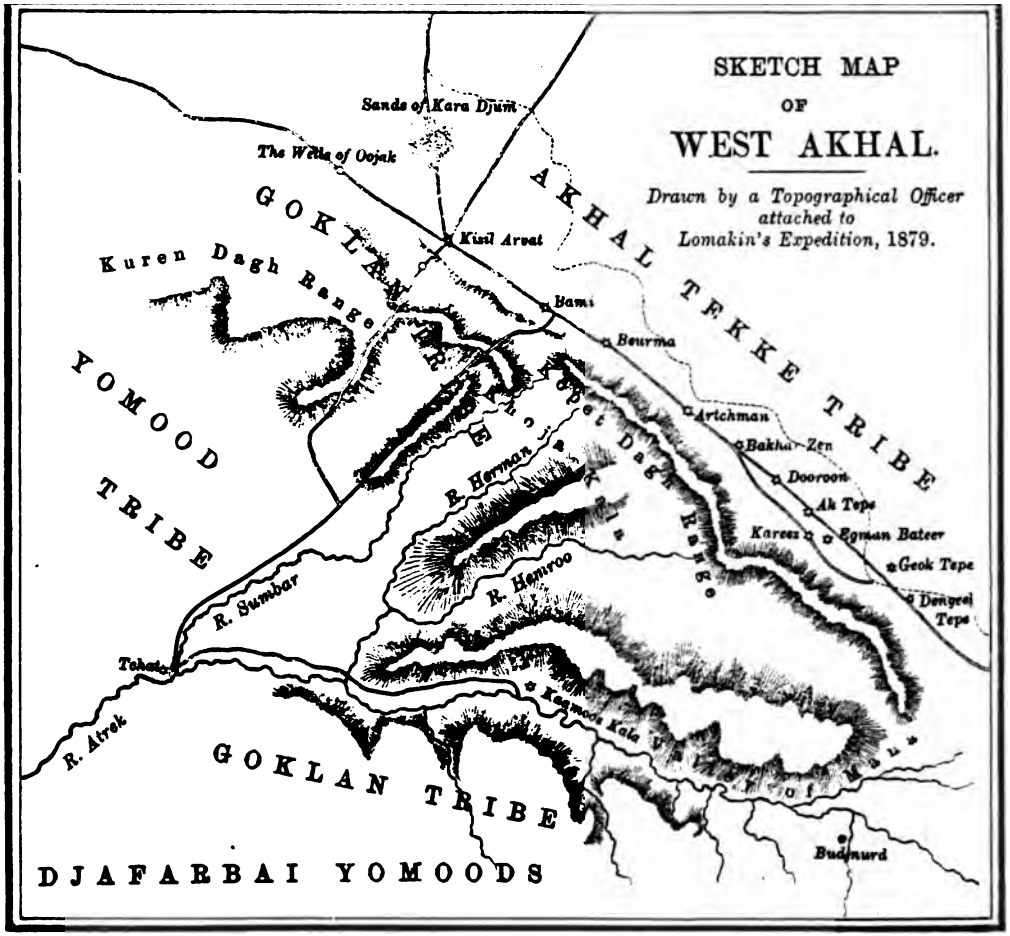
unity and without leaders, who that regards the course of Russian progress can doubt that, if we are timid, apathetic, or consenting, a few years will see them in possession of a fortress which, in their hands, will be rendered impregnable, and will command the road to India with a facility for aggression which may be measured by Ayoob Khan's rapid march to Candahar."—LORD NAPIER, "Minute on Candahar," October 12th, 1880.

THE capture of Geok Tepé since the preceding chapters passed through the press, calls for an additional one dealing with that Russian victory, more especially as it has been followed by a declaration of the intention of the Government to evacuate Candahar on the earliest possible opportunity. Any opinion I may express, will be appropriately preceded by a brief resumé of the Russian operations leading up to the conquest of the Akhal Tekke capital.*

General Skobeleff's appointment to the command of the Transcaspian army was contemporaneous with the fall of the Beaconsfield Ministry. He was not gazetted until the Gladstone Government came into office, and his movements were slow and undecisive until their policy was known. Arriving at Tchikishlar early in May, he made a rapid survey of the Transcaspian military district, and gave an impulse to preparations long in progress, which resulted in the despatch of troops up the Atrek and the departure from Fort Douz Oloum, on

* I may mention that I early in the year applied to General Skobeleff for permission to accompany the Russian army on my own account, in order to be able to write from personal survey the history of the campaign, but failed to obtain it. I have, however, been successful in obtaining a deal of information bearing upon the operations, and although the death of General Petroosevitch has deprived me of his invaluable assistance, I trust to be able eventually to issue a complete account of the campaign.

the 8th of June, of two columns: his own composed of six companies of infantry, six squadrons of cavalry, and eight guns, and another, acting as a reserve, of half that strength. Bami, the first Akhal fort after crossing the Kopet Dagh, was occupied on the 23rd, and a portion of the naval brigade was despatched west to garrison Kizil Arvat. From here communications were thrown across the steppe to Krasnovodsk, where General Petroosevitch, the Governor, was engaged making preparations for the construction of the railway. Having fortified Bami, and reconnoitred the neighbouring country, Skobeleff set out on the 13th of July to "discover the strength and position of the enemy at the aouls of Dengeel and Geok Tepé, and to destroy the crops and supplies at the intervening settlements." The expeditionary force consisted of three companies, three squadrons, four horse artillery and two mountain guns, four Hotchkiss machine guns, and eight rockets; the total number of troops being a little over 1,000 men. The advance was opposed at every settlement, but the Tekke resistance was easily overcome, and on the fourth day (July 17) the column halted at Egman Bateer Kala, six miles from Geok Tepé, where it entrenched itself. The following morning the troops marched at sunrise to Geok Tepé, and Skobeleff spent half a day in reconnoitring the place. On turning back at noon the enemy swarmed after him, and attacked his troops so vigorously that they did not reach the camp till sundown. The Tekkes repeated the attack the next morning, but were beaten off. They, however, worried the detachment all the way back to Bami, and it was only the well-known charmed life borne


SKETCH MAP
OF
WEST AKHAL.
Drawn by a Topographical Officer
attached to
Lomakin's Expedition, 1879.
Sands of Kara Djum
The Wells of Oojak
Kisil Arvat
GOKLAN TRIBE
AKHAL TEKKE TRIBE
Kuren Dagh Range
Bami
Beurma
Archman
Bakhar Zen
Dooroon
Ak Tepe
Karaez
Egman Bateer
Geok Tepe
Dengeel Tepe
YOMOOD TRIBE
R. Herman
R. Sumbar
R. Henroo
Tahta
R. Atrek
Kaahooa Kala
GOKLAN TRIBE
DJAFARBAI YOMOODS
Budjnurd

by Russian soldiers in the field that saved the troops from heavy losses. As it was, the ten days' march and the reconnaissance were accomplished with "merely a loss of 3 men killed and 8 wounded, and 8 horses killed and 13 wounded," while the casualties on the side of the Tekkes were "prodigious."

The reconnaissance proved to Skobeleff that Geok Tepé could only be taken by a regular siege. Preparations on a large scale were therefore commenced at once, and the Viceroy of the Caucasus was asked to place at Skobeleff's disposal 12,000 troops and 100 guns. The road from Tchikishlar to Bami was strengthened by several forts, but the Krasnovodsk-Kizil-Arvat route was chosen as the new line of invasion. The advantage of holding Bami theoretically was, that it connected and protected the two roads running thither to Akhal from the Caspian. In practice, however, it proved but a feeble barrier to the Tekke horsemen. Throughout the whole of August, September, and October, they raided against each line of communication; sometimes attacking intermediate posts, other times falling in masses upon Cossack convoys, and in general making it a very difficult matter for the Russians to get their supplies uninterruptedly from the coast. That these encounters were not altogether bloodless, we have ample proof in the diary of the war published by the *Rooski Invalide*, in which constant mention is made of raids resulting in "casualties on our side" of "one or two killed" and "three or four wounded." One of these onslaughts, indeed, merits almost the designation of battle. On the 23rd of December, *i.e.* a week after Skobeleff had arrived a second time

before Geok Tepé, and when it might have been supposed the presence of his army would have kept all the Tekkes inside their menaced stronghold, 1,000 of them suddenly swooped down on a convoy 150 miles to his rear, near Fort Kazantchik, between Kizil Arvat and the Caspian. The convoy consisted of 2,000 camels, guarded by a demi-company of the Apsheron infantry regiment. In a few minutes, according to the *Invalide*, 25 of the Russians were killed and 11 wounded. All the camels were carried off. After a while, a demi-squadron of Cossacks arrived from Fort Kazantchik, and gave chase, coming up with the Turcomans after a run of 10 miles and recapturing the herd. The total Russian loss during the early autumn raids was, 54 killed and a large number wounded.

Skobeleff completed his preparations at Bami in December, and early in the month pushed forward his troops, occupying in succession all the kalas lying between Bami and Geok Tepé, and providing them with strong garrisons. Kareez was carried by storm by Colonel Navrotsky on the night of the 6th, and the defenders put to the sword. On the 15th Skobeleff himself, with the besieging force, arrived at Egman Bateer Kala, which received a new designation—Fort Samoursk, from a regiment of that name accompanying the column.

Samoursk lies close under the brow of the Kopet Dagh, here 3,000 feet high and as perpendicular as a brick wall. The distance from Bami is 77 miles, from Geok Tepé six. It should be understood that Geok Tepé is the name of the district invaded, not of the principal Tekke stronghold, which bears the

title of Dengeel Tepé. The district is washed by the river Senezab, which, on issuing from the Kopet Dagh, courses first through the fortified camp of Yangi Kala, constructed at the very foot of the cliffs; then, a mile beyond, through Dengeel Tepé; and afterwards, at a distance of another mile, through the small and insignificant settlement of Geok Tepé. A few miles beyond, the stream loses itself in the desert.

The day after his arrival at Samoursk, Skobeleff sent out to reconnoitre the fortified settlements. This discovered the Tekkes to be gathered in force at each of the three aouls, with the majority defending the middle encampment. The reconnaissance was entirely successful, but it cost the Russians in casualties 4 men killed and 31 wounded; among the latter being 4 staff and superior officers. Whether Skobeleff's preparations were incomplete, or whether he wished to be joined by the Turkestan contingent before commencing decisive operations, we are left in doubt; but the next movement did not take place until December 24th, *i.e.* the day after the affair at Kazantchik, and the day of the arrival of Colonel Kouropatkin from Samarcand.

This clever officer, who acted as chief of Skobeleff's staff during the Turkish war, set out from Samarcand in November, accompanied by a detachment said to be composed of 500 persons, but believed to be very much larger. Entering Bokhara, he found that the Emir had been prepared for his intrusion by Gospodin Ibragimoff, a diplomatic agent of General Kaufmann; * and on

* Ibragimoff left Tashkent for Bokhara, November 18th, and arrived at Karshi some time before Kouropatkin.

reaching Tchardjui, on the river Oxus, received every assistance from the Bokharan authorities, Colonel Mayeff, of the Intelligence Service and Editor of the *Turkestanski Vedomosti*, having preceded him in August, and explored the country to within a short distance of Merv. From Tchardjui, which is only a week's caravan journey from Merv, Kouropatkin proceeded to Kabakli, and afterwards to Khiva; thence striking back again across the desert to Kizil Arvat by way of Ortakuya and Igdy, and reaching Akhal on the 20th. On his way he received assistance from General Gloukhovsky, who was engaged with 10 engineers, protected by a strong military force, in determining the possibility of diverting the Oxus into the Caspian.*

On the 24th of December the third reconnaissance of Geok Tepé took place. When the troops had marched two miles from Samoursk, they came into collision with 20,000 Tekkes, possibly proceeding on the same errand to the Russian camp. The Turcomans fought with such desperation that reinforcements had to be hurried up. For four hours the conflict continued, and then the Tekkes retired, leaving many dead behind. The Russian losses were one killed and four wounded.

The reconnaissance "exposed the points of attack," but eight days elapsed before another movement took place from Samoursk. On the 1st of January decisive operations commenced. Early in the morning three columns marched from the camp to storm the aoul

* A recent telegram from Central Asia states that Gloukhovsky has declared the undertaking to be feasible.

of Yangi Kala. They consisted of the following troops :—

I. North Column : led by Colonel Kozelkoff :—
8 companies of infantry.
2 sotnyas of cavalry.
10 guns and two rockets.

II. South Column : led by Colonel Kouropatkin :—
8 companies of infantry.
2 sotnyas of cavalry.
10 guns and two rockets.

III. Main Body : led by Skobeleff :—
18½ companies of infantry.
7 squadrons of cavalry.
32 guns.

Collectively the fighting force comprised 34½ companies, 11 squadrons, and 52 guns ; or, in all, more than 8,000 troops, the whole armed with breechloaders, and having, in excess of the cannon enumerated, several rocket batteries, 11 Hotchkiss machine guns, and a number of mitrailleuses of older design. Opposed to these, accepting the highest Russian calculation, were 30,000 Tekkes, badly armed, undisciplined, unprovided with leaders of any mark, and having no artillery. Their three strongholds were, with the exception to a certain degree of Yangi Kala, placed stark upon the plain, and consisted simply of a series of huge clay ramparts raised round about camps, and further strengthened with outworks and ditches. All of them could be dominated by artillery at a distance of 1,000 yards, and were defended by men who, until 1879, had never fought behind

entrenchments, and whose bravery, as we have seen in previous pages, was a point upon which travellers strongly differed. They had, however, one great incentive to desperate resistance. Lomakin had refused to give them quarter in 1879, and had shot down their wives and little ones as though they had been rats. We are not told anywhere in the Russian papers that Skobeleff's operations were marked with any greater clemency. The war, indeed, seems to have been waged in the "spirited Circassian style," so hateful when conducted by the Mussulman Turk, so easily condoned when carried on by the Christian Russian.

Arriving at Yangi Kala, the Russians found the ground to the south flooded, and barred with barricades. Kouropatkin, however, forced his way to the rear, and Kozelkoff aided him there and at the flank, compelling the Tekkes to clear out of the aoul and run across the plain towards Dengeel Tepé. In so doing they had to pass across the face of Skobeleff's column and run the gauntlet of a murderous artillery and musketry fire, besides having at the rear of them Colonel Count Orloff Denisoff and two sotnyas of Taman Cossacks. To rescue their countrymen and recapture the aoul, the Tekkes twice sallied out of Dengeel Tepé, but were each time beaten back by the Russian artillery. During the night they issued a third time, and tried to storm Yangi Kala, but were again defeated. The Russian losses during all this fighting were, "one killed and ten wounded," Colonel Kozelkoff being among the latter. In telegraphing an account of the conflict, the St. Petersburg Correspondent of the *Daily News*, who furnished a good supply of reliable

private news from the outset of the campaign, asked that these figures "might be accepted with reserve, as the Russians, imitating the French in many points, have not cast off the Napoleonic traditions of attenuating losses and defeats."

The next day, January 2nd, a reconnaissance of Dengeel Tepé was made from the new base at Yangi Kala. This was conducted by General Petroosevitch, with six squadrons and a troop of mountain artillery. On passing along the east side of the aoul the Tekkes swarmed out, and fought so fiercely at the north-east angle, that Skobeleff had to proceed to the rescue with four companies, a squadron, and a battery. Such was the desperate character of the Tekke onslaught, that many horsemen fell dead at a distance of ten yards from the barricade of Berdan rifles. Yet the Russian losses were only one killed and five wounded.

The following day, January 3rd, was spent in completing the removal of the camp from Samoursk to Yangi Kala, and in preparing materials for the siege. At daybreak on the 4th the Russians pushed out from Yangi Kala to within 800 yards of Dengeel Tepé, where they laid the first parallel. A battle then took place, during which the Tekkes, who had been reinforced by 5,000 men from Merv, made a series of the most desperate onslaughts on the Russian line. So sanguinary was the fighting that in one spot, on the Russian left flank, they left more than 300 dead bodies. These warriors did not fall in vain. In their death-struggle they struck down Skobeleff's best adviser, the gifted General Petroosevitch, and with him Major Buligin of the Tver

Dragoons, Captain Ivanoff of the Taman Cossacks, and 19 rank and file. Fifty-five Russian soldiers were also wounded, and three officers—Lieut.-Colonel Gogoberidze of the Sheervan Regiment, Centurion Aleinikoff of the Labin Cossacks, and Centurion Ramentsoff of the Orenburg Cossacks. The Tekke attack was everywhere successfully repelled.

From the 4th to the 7th was spent in strengthening the first parallel, and on the latter date the second parallel was laid, 400 yards from the principal rampart. The inclusive loss during these operations was one killed, and Captain Zouboff and three wounded.

The 8th passed over quietly. On the 9th, at 6 o'clock in the evening, when it was getting dusk, 30,000 Tekkes issued from Dengeel Tepé, and rushed towards the Russian trenches, then held by 19 companies, a command of chasseurs, 100 foot-Cossacks, 21 guns, and 3 mortars; in all, 2,600 men. In spite of a desperate defence, the Tekkes took possession of the outworks and part of the second parallel; capturing four mountain guns and three mortars. They then advanced against the first parallel, but failing to carry it, retired towards the aoul, followed by the Reserve, which had been brought up from Yangi Kala. The Tekkes fought each step with extraordinary persistency, but the second parallel was occupied, and all the cannon recaptured except a mountain gun. The Russian losses were extremely heavy. A company of the Apsheron Regiment suffered in particular, losing 32 killed and 10 wounded out of 70 men. The battalional commander, Lieut.-Colonel Prince Maga-

loff, was left in the trenches dead, and with him Lieutenants Tchinareff and Gotto. All the artillerymen were cut to pieces. Simultaneous with the attack on the trenches, a body of Tekke horse fell upon the camp, but were driven off. Directly matters began to settle down, Skobeleff gave orders for a fresh advance, to construct the third parallel. The noise of the spades soon reached the ear of the enemy, and they issued again from the aoul, without, however, being able to check the operations. All night long the work continued, and by daybreak the third parallel was finished.

The morning of the 10th was spent in bombarding the aoul and the outworks on the east side, distant 50 paces from the main rampart. At 3 o'clock a column advanced to the assault. For three hours the fighting was obstinate and bloody, but in the end the whole of the outworks were carried. The aggregate losses on the 9th and 10th were: killed, Lieut.-Colonel Prince Magaloff, Lieut.-Colonel Mamatseff, Lieutenants Tchinareff, Gotto, Sandetski, and Velepoff, Dr. Troitsky, and 102 rank and file; wounded, Lieut.-Colonel Wilde, Aide-de-Camp Prince Golitzin, Captains Zouboff, Yablochoff, and Bartosh, Lieutenants Grannekoff and Podgoulbitsky, Centurion Assier, Sub-Lieutenant Voinoff, and 84 men; eight hospital men were also killed or wounded. Captain Valuieff was specially mentioned for his bravery. Having had his retreat cut off by the Tekkes, he operated upon them with grape shot, aided by a single soldier, and kept them off until rescued.

On the 11th the aoul was bombarded, and a warm

musketry-fire maintained all day. At half-past 8 at night, the enemy made a sortie against the front and left flank; they also attacked the camp on both sides and rear. An obstinate conflict ensued, hand-to-hand in many places, and continuing without intermission till past midnight. The Tekkes enjoyed success at the outset, capturing a redoubt on the left flank of the siege works, defended by a company of the Transcaspian Local Battalion and two mountain guns. All the artillerymen were cut to pieces, and the company lost its commander and 39 men killed, and 41 men wounded. After a while the Russian reserve came up and retook the redoubt, together with one gun; the other cannon, although followed up almost to the rampart, being carried off by the enemy. The prize, however, was of no value, as the breech piece had been removed by the artillerymen, and left unnoticed in the redoubt. All night long a cannonade was maintained against the aoul, and the next morning, to strengthen the besiegers and diminish the distance from the camp, the latter was moved from Yangi Kala to the first parallel. The losses during the night were: Lieutenant Yanovsky killed, and Captains Noodjevsky, Valuieff, and Kharkevitch, Lieutenant Grineff, and Ensign Vagaloff, wounded. Of the rank and file 52 were killed and 96 wounded. In consequence of the continued heavy casualties, troops were ordered from Michaelovsk and Bami to the front.

From the 12th to the 15th the Russians strengthened their siege works and fortified the camp. On the night of the 15th a position was carried forty yards from the main rampart. The enemy tried to

recover the point, but in vain. On the 16th the Tekkes sallied out, at 7 o'clock in the evening, against the centre and left flank. After a bloody fight they were everywhere repulsed, and directly afterwards mining operations were begun, to crown the glacis and strengthen the line of defence. In this conflict Colonels Kouropatkin and Kozelkoff specially distinguished themselves, and Skobeleff asked that the Order of St. George of the 4th class might be given to Lieut.-Colonel Tseprinsky, of the Sheervan Regiment, for driving back with the bayonet a body of Tekkes ten times as numerous as his own detachment. The losses on the 15th and 16th were: Ensign Khodkevitch killed, and Captain Rostovtseff, Lieutenant Runovsky, Ensigns Abadzieff and Lapatinsky wounded, all with cold steel. Of the rank and file 12 were killed and 78 wounded; 15 horses were also killed and 25 wounded.

On the 17th the sappers were reported to have arrived within 24 yards of the main rampart. The losses that day were Lieutenant Prince Kherkheoolidze and 17 men wounded, and 4 men killed; 2 horses killed and 6 wounded. On the 18th Lieutenant Zrolovsky and 4 men were wounded, and one man killed. On the 19th, the dead lying in front of the Russian trenches in great numbers and beginning to decompose, Skobeleff, to avoid the loss that would ensue if he attempted to have them removed under the enemy's fire, proposed from a tower of observation, erected 80 yards from the ramparts, that the Tekkes should carry off the slain. A suspension of hostilities for an hour thereupon ensued. In order to prevent any misunder-

standing, it was suggested to the enemy that they should afterwards reoccupy their positions and be the first to fire. This was done at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, when due warning was given to the Russians; the Turcomans at the same time taking care not to fire until Skobeleff's troops, who had for the time left the trenches, had returned to them. The conduct of the Tekkes throughout was characterized by Skobeleff as being most honourable. As soon as the truce was at an end the firing was renewed with its former fury. On the 20th breaching operations commenced. On the night of the 23rd a body of volunteers carried dynamite to the breach, and increased the opening. The next morning the assault took place.

The army was divided into four detachments, the main body being under Skobeleff, and the three storming columns commanded by Colonels Kouropatkin, Kozelkoff, and Gaidaroff. At 7 o'clock Gaidaroff commenced the attack against the south front, 36 guns at the same time concentrating a fire upon the breach. At 11.20 he carried the kala at the south-west corner, and directly afterwards a mine containing two tons of gunpowder was discharged under the east front, destroying several hundred Tekkes. Both breaches were entered ten minutes after, and a bloody hand-to-hand fight ensued. The enemy clung desperately to the rampart, and kept the Russians at bay for an hour. Two battalions and four companies of the Reserve were then brought up, and the Samoursk Battalion escaladed the wall between the two breaches, driving the enemy back. At half-past 1 Gaidaroff moved on again, escalading

the south-west parapet and entering the aoul. Pushing his way forward he captured Dengeel hill, dominating the whole position, and the Tekkes thereupon relinquished further defence and fled. The third aoul, Geok Tepé, must have been evacuated beforehand, or about the same time, as we are not told that any fighting accompanied its capture. General Skobeleff concludes the telegram: "A flying column of all arms pursued and hacked the fugitives for 10 miles." In addition to the Tekkes thus destroyed, 4,000 bodies were found in the aoul, and numbers near the trenches. With the aoul were taken the lost Russian guns, ammunition wagons (Russian, of course, but whether captured from Lomakin or Skobeleff we are not told), supplies of all kinds, 4,000 families, and 700 Persian slaves. The losses during the assault were: Captain Grek, Centurion Koonakovsky, Lieutenant Merkhiloff, and Ensign Moritz killed; and Lieut.-Colonels Popoff and Tseprinsky, Aide-de-Camp Prince Orloff-Denisoff, Captains Metkevitch, Voltchansky, Getchell, Khorkevitch, and Davidoff, Lieutenants Yureneff and Arkatski, Sub-Lieutenants Popoff, Degtereff, and Magometoff, and Ensigns Ushakoff, Kasherinenoff, Usatcheff, Dzerdzievsky, and Andronikoff wounded. Ten other officers also received contusions. Among the men 50 were killed, 235 wounded, and 75 contusioned. Among the horses 43 were killed and 121 wounded.

In this manner fell the stronghold of the Akhal Tekkes, after a defence which will take its place in history as one of the most remarkable of the present century. At the highest Russian estimate the Turcomans never exceeded 30,000 men, and at the

lowest Russian estimate the disciplined force under Skobeleff never fell below 8,000 troops.* If we make that allowance for exaggeration on the one hand, and attenuation on the other, which is customary with Russian generals, we shall find that the Turcomans did not exceed the Russians by a much greater proportion than two to one. As already pointed out, the Tekkes occupied a camp in a hollow in a treeless plain, and fought, without artillery or long-range rifles, from behind broad clay ramparts and ditches. The Russians on their part possessed heavy siege guns, 9-pounder field guns, and mountain guns—in all 58 pieces, besides machine guns and rockets. The Tekkes were undisciplined and had no leaders of note. The Russians were led by their best general, assisted by a scratch staff of experienced Central Asian officers.

Skobeleff's losses during the siege of Geok Tepé † were greater than the whole of the Russian losses in all the previous sieges in Central Asia since 1853; *i.e.* since the conquest of Central Asia commenced. I subjoin comparative lists.

Losses during the Siege of Geok Tepé.

		Killed.	Wounded.
Dec. 16.	Reconnaissance of Geok Tepé	4	31
„ 24.	Reconnaissance of Geok Tepé	1	4

* That is, available for fighting. This does not include the force guarding the camp and the reinforcements that arrived after the capture of Yangi Kala. My belief is, that, at the very lowest, the Russians had 10,000 troops, while, at the very highest, the Akhal Tekkes did not much exceed 20,000 men.

† I employ the more generally used designation, "Geok Tepé," as it has been officially accepted in Russia, in spite of "Dengeel Tepé" being the proper term.

		Killed.	Wounded.
Jan. 1.	Capture of Yangi Kala . .	1	11
„ 2.	Reconnaissance of Geok Tepé	1	5
„ 4.	Laying the first parallel .	22	58
„ 7.	Laying the second parallel .	1	4
„ 9.	Tekke capture of the second parallel . . .	113	97
„ 10.	Storming the east outworks		
„ 10.	Tekke attack on trenches and camp	53	101
„ 15.	Tekke sally . . .	13	82
„ 16.	Tekke sally . . .		
„ 17.	Siege operations . . .	4	18
„ 18.	Siege operations . . .	1	5
„ 24.	Storming Geok Tepé . .	54	253
	In all	268	669
		937	

Losses in Central Asian Sieges.

Date.	Fortress.	Killed.	Wounded.	Total.
1853.	Ak Metchet . .	25	75	100
1864.	Turkestan . .	5	33	38
1864.	Tchimkent . .	6	41	47
1865.	Tashkent . .	25	17	42
1866.	Khodjent . .	11	122	133
1866.	Ura-Tiube . .	17	210	227
1866.	Djizak . . .	6	92	98
1870.	Kitab . . .	34	116	150
	In all .	129	706	835
			26	

The above official list was published by Colonel Kostenko in 1880. The losses may be underestimated: Schuyler hints that they repeatedly were. Anyhow, they answer their purpose, in enabling us to compare one official list of losses with another. But Skobeleff's losses do not represent the whole of the Russian blood lavished on Geok Tepé. The aoul was unsuccessfully stormed in 1879, when the Russian losses were 450 killed and wounded. The real total, therefore, is as under:—

	Killed.	Wounded.	Total.
Losses, 1879 . .	200	250	450
,, 1881 . .	268	669	937
In all .	468	919	1,387

This does not include the losses during the engagements preceding the investment of Geok Tepé. Thus, in the attack on the convoy at Kazantchik, the Russians lost 25 men killed and 11 wounded—more than in any battle in the open in Central Asia. We may compare it with Kostenko's list of battles fought in the open during the conquest of Central Asia:—

Losses in Central Asian Battles.

Date.	Battle.	Killed.	Wounded.	Total.
1860 .	Oozoon-Agatch .	2	32	34
1866 .	Irdjar . . .	0	12	12
1868 .	Samarcand . .	2	38	40
1868 .	Zeraboolak . .	0	37	37
1868 .	Karshi . . .	2	10	12
1870 .	Koolikalan Heights	7	30	37
1871 .	Ketmen . .	2	32	34

Date.	Battle.	Killed.	Wounded.	Total.
1871 .	Alimtoo . . .	0	5	5
1871 .	Tchin-tcha-Khodzi	1	18	19
1873 .	Tchandeer . . .	4	37	41
1875 .	Makhram . .	5	9	14
	In all . . .	25	260	285

Experts in Central Asian politics will detect omissions and attenuations in this; but, like Skobeleff's gazetted losses, it is put forth as officially correct. Taking it on its own merits, we may institute the following comparison:—

Russian Losses in the Conquest of Central Asia.

	Killed.	Wounded.	Total.
Losses in sieges . .	129	706	835
Losses in open battles .	25	260	285
In all .	154	966	1,120
Losses in taking Geok Tepé	468	919	1,387

We thus see that the two attacks on Geok Tepé cost Russia more lives than all her twenty years' battles and sieges in Central Asia. That the fighting was infinitely more bloody, will be seen from the fact that the number of men killed was three times as great. The losses in officers also were extremely heavy, including 1 general, 2 lieut.-colonels, 1 major, 2 captains, 6 lieutenants, 1 doctor, and 1 ensign, killed; and 1 colonel, 6 lieut.-colonels, 13 captains, 12 lieutenants and sub-lieutenants, 3 centurions, and 9 ensigns, wounded.

The splendid Tekke defence may excite our admiration, but when we realise the blessing bestowed on Khorassan by the breaking up of this nest of man-stealers, we can hardly regret the fall of the place and the collapse of the power for evil of the people of Akhal. At the same time we cannot accord unstinted praise to the Russians. If there is such a thing now-a-days as the intervention of the Almighty in the affairs of men, then the heavy losses experienced by Russia in capturing Geok Tepé might seem to be a Divine judgment for the barbarous and uncalled-for massacre of the Yomood Turcomans in 1873, and the bombardment of the 5,000 Tekke women and children by General Lomakin six years later.

On the 28th a column was sent 45 miles east by Skobeleff, and occupied without resistance Askabat, Annaoo, and Gyaoors; thus completing the conquest of the oasis of Akhal, and placing the Cossacks within 140 miles' distance of Meshed.

On the 28th the Duke of Argyll, who, like a second Rip van Winkle, seems to have been asleep during the conquest of Khokand and Khiva, and the annexations in the Atrek region of the 1870–80 epoch, made a declaration of faith in the House of Lords that it was "untrue" that Russia had been recently making great advances in Central Asia. "Since the days of 1868 and 1869," said his Grace, in the dogmatic tone that ever marks the speech of a man hopelessly wrong-headed, "Since 1868 and 1869, when Russia conquered Bokhara, there has been no advance that can be compared with that conquest." A declaration was also made at the same time by Lord Hartington, that the Government

maintained unaltered their intention of abandoning Candahar.

I have no need to repeat again the denunciations against such fatal ignorance of Russia's progress in Central Asia, or to reiterate the arguments against the shiftless hand-to-mouth policy of the Government. I have stated my facts, I have appended maps to illustrate them, and England herself must judge whether her rulers appreciate the peril in which they are involving the Empire by their negative policy in Asia.

THE RUSSIAN BEAR AND THE ENGLISH WOLF.

Let the grey old Wolf of the Sea beware,
For the Russians her empire to tatters will tear;
"And then the wide world, with its land and its sea,
Will belong," cries the Tsar, "to Russia and me!"

For ages our Empires have grown like a tree,
The Bear on the Land, the Wolf on the Sea;
But the Bear he is bigger and braver than she,
"Whose howls," cries the Tsar, "shall be settled by me!"

So the Bear and the Wolf a tussle will try,
While the matrons they weep, and the maidens they cry;
But the fate of the Empires 'tis easy to see,
"For the Land," cries the Tsar, "*must* conquer the Sea!"

Russian War Song, translated by the Author.

APPENDIX.

KOSTENKO'S TURKESTAN MARCH-ROUTES TO MERV.*

I.—From Kabakli to Merv.

Kabakli is a Bokharan fortress near the Oxus. The route was compiled from inquiries made by Gospodin Ibragimoff among the Tekkes. The distances, as near as can be judged by the map, are exaggerated one verst in 100.

	Tashes.
1. Kabakli to the wells of Takht . . .	5
Road difficult; sandy, good spring-water at Takht.	
2. Takht to the wells of Adji. . . .	4
Good road.	
3. Adji to the wells of Tchoontook. . .	4

* Translated from *Turkestanski Kri*, 3 vols. 8vo., 1,200 pages, published at St. Petersburg in 1880, by Colonel L. F. Kostenko, of the Russian Etat Major, and for thirteen years attached to the Intelligence Staff in Turkestan. I am now translating this into English, under the title of the "Staff Officer's Guide and Statesman's Handbook to Central Asia." Recently Kostenko proceeded to Kuldja as chief of Kaufmann's staff, and I believe I am not infringing the privacy of a very pleasant correspondence, in mentioning that he holds strongly that the Central Asian Question can be satisfactorily solved without any recourse to the sword.

		Tashes.
4.	Tchoontook to the wells of Tchoontook (?)	5
5.	Tchoontook „ Yaradji	2
6.	Yaradji „ Khosh-Koyou	3
7.	Khosh-Koyou „ Sardaba	3
8.	Sardaba „ Padaman. At Padaman there is a road to Kari-Kishlak, near the Oxus.	4
9.	Padaman to the wells of Gok Tepe	3
10.	Gok Tepe „ Kara Yab	5
11.	Kara Yab to the towers of Kishman	8
12.	Kishman to Merv (ferry of Khan Kheltchik, 15 versts north of Merv)	6
		52 tashes.*
	In all	416 versts.

The same march-route, according to inquiries made by Gospodin Khokhriakoff:—

		Versts.
1.	Kabakli to Takht. From Kabakli deep sands the whole time. At Takht many wells, a yard deep. A sufficient supply of forage and wood there; beyond, deep sands continue.	104
2.	Takht to Yaradji. At Yaradji are three wells, two yards deep; water bitter. Sufficiency of forage and fuel. Road beyond sandy, but not so deep.	200
3.	Yaradji to Bairamali. Here are Turcoman settlements. Clover and wood to be found.	160
	In all	464

The same march-route, according to inquiries made by Gospodin Khokhriakoff of Seid Mohamed Urazoff, a Salor Turcoman, living at Merv:—

* A Bokharan *tash* consists of eight versts, and a Khivan *tash* of six. A verst is about three-quarters of a mile.—C.M.

	Number of Menzils.*	
Kabakli.	.	From Kabakli to Takht a pack-camel can proceed in two days and two nights, stopping on the road to rest and feed three times; each halt occupying three or four hours. Although the road is sandy, yet the sand is not particularly deep.
Takht . .	4	The wells of Takht are about two yards deep: water fresh: forage consists of feather-grass (seleoo), and fuel of saksaoul. Road sandy, but easily traversed.
Yaradji . .	6	Many wells at Yaradji: six feet deep: water satisfactory: sufficiency of forage and fuel. Road for two-thirds of the stage (as far as Kizil Takeer) sandy; beyond hard.
Toort Koyoo .	4	Four wells here, 90 feet deep, containing fresh water. Sufficiency of forage and wood.
High towers of Kishman.	1	No water here.
Ruins of Fort Nazim Kala.	1	Tekke settlement. Meadows irrigated by canal water from Moorgab, 15 miles distant.

From Nazim Kala to Merv the road runs right through a cultivated district.

II.—Kari Kishlak to Merv viâ the Padaman Wells.

Kari Kishlak lies 12 tashes (96 versts) from Kabakli, up the Oxus.

		Tashes.
1.	Wells of Bal-Koyoo	4
2.	,, Koorrook	2
3.	,, Dagjik	3
4.	,, Berdidjik	5
5.	,, Yaradji	3
6.	,, Kheshaigoor	4

* A *menzil* is a camel's march of 35 to 40 versts.—K.

	Tashes.
7. Wells of Mallya-Khairan-Koodootchi .	8
8. „ Padaman	5
9. Merv	22
	51 tashes.
In all	408 versts.

III.—Tchardjui to Merv.

Tchardjui lies 8 versts from the Oxus, and 11 tashes from Kari Kishlak, up the Oxus.

	Tashes.
1. Town of Karaool	2
2. „ Ishak Rabat	3
3. „ Rapadak	5
4. Wells of Utch Khodja	10
5. „ Naiza-Sheker	1
5. „ Boogoor-deshik-Khilkha . .	6
7. Merv	12
	39 tashes.
In all	312 versts.

From Boogoor-Deshik to Merv the annexed march-route has been compiled from inquiries made by Gospodin Khokhriakoff.

	Tashes.	
1. Wells of Kaltcha	5	Road from Boogoor level, and though sandy is not difficult. Many wells with good water at Kaltcha: 6 fathoms deep. Sufficiency of forage and fuel. Beyond Kaltcha road level and hard. Water at the night-halt is from a channel, led from the Moorgab. Here commences the oasis of Merv.

	Tashes.	
2. Irrigation canal of Ersari-Yab	5	Good road beyond Ersari, running through an inhabited district.
3. Merv	5	
In all 15 tashes.		

Ibragimoff's estimate of 12 tashes may be accepted as more accurate.

IV.—Tishlan to Merv.

Tishlan is a village situated 9 tashes (72 versts) from Tchardjui, up the Oxus.

	Tashes.
1. Wells of Adji	3
2. ,, Shishmya	4
3. ,, Shar-Koodook	5
4. ,, Kosh-Koyoo	3
5. ,, Sari-Koodook	2
6. ,, Boogoor-Deshik	5
	26 (?)
To Merv	12
	38 tashes.
In all 304 versts.	

V.—Khodja Koondooz to Merv.

Khodja Koondooz is a town situated 4 tashes (32 versts) from Tishlan, up the Oxus.

	Tashes.
1. Wells of Kara Koodook	3
2. ,, Kooshek Tooshti	5
3. ,, Bash Koodook	not given.
4. ,, Sakar Koodook	,,
5. ,, Khoili	,,
6. ,, Ootch-Meeseer	,,
7. ,, Sharkhee	,,

		Tashes.
8.	Wells of Shoor Koodook . .	not given.
9.	„ Sharshali-Koodook . .	„
10.	„ Karkeen	„
11.	„ Sharoli Baba . . .	„
12.	„ Khooloozli . . .	„
13.	„ Neegarali . . .	„
14.	„ Aeer-Sooseek . . .	„
15.	„ Soodji-Kooyou . .	„
16.	„ Ak-Marzeek . . .	„
17.	„ Dashli	„
18.	„ Shalaba	„
19.	„ Djiti-Kooyou . . .	„
20.	„ Avgan-Nar . . .	„
21.	„ Djizik	„
22.	„ Karatagan . . .	„
23.	„ Dali	„
24.	„ Neegarali . . .	„
25.	„ Sari-Koosoo . . .	„
26.	„ Malia Khairan . .	„
27.	„ Boogoor Deshik or Boogoor Teshin . . .	„
		28 tashes.
28.	To Merv	12 „
		40 „
		In all 320 versts.

The road is comparatively good; wells beyond Kooshek-Tooshti being found at intervals of one or two tashes.

The Roads from the Oxus to Merv.

Respecting the whole of the distances from the Oxus to Merv, it is indispensable to state that they are greatly exaggerated, owing probably to the fact of the natives being accustomed to give their estimates in round figures.

At any rate, the best roads to Merv from Turkestan proceed from the Oxus.

The direct road from Khiva to Merv runs across a desert twice as wide as the desert from Tchardjui and other enumerated points on the Oxus.

Along this road two Englishmen have passed, Abbott and

Shakespear. Journeying from Merv to Khiva, Abbott found only six wells.

The following is the route compiled by Gospodin Khokhriakoff, at Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk (Khiva), in 1877.

VI.—Khiva (Bish-Arik) to Merv.

	Versts.	
Bish-Arik . .		From Bish-Arik the road is sandy, but not deep.
Sadja wells . .	150	The wells are 16 makhovaya sajens* deep; fresh water; can water 100 horses at a time; well soon fills with water. Beyond Sadja the sands also are not deep.
Eshi-Koolatch wells	250	Two wells, 7 makhovaya sajens deep, with a deal of water. Road the same.
Tchashma . .	150	Moorgab used to flow to this point, but a dry bed only now remains, the Turcomans having dammed the river at Merv. Wells may easily be dug a yard deep in the bed, when water will appear. Fodder and fuel afforded by the abundant growth of reeds. Along this dead channel the Turcomans pasture their flocks in the winter. Road to Merv over hard ground, not sandy; running the old time alongside the old channel, along which many wells have been dug.
Merv . . .	180	At 15 versts from Merv there is a ferry across the Moorgab called Khan-Kitchken. Here the late Tekke elder Kooshoot Khan constructed a stronghold capable of holding 40,000 tents.
	In all 730 versts.	

* A *makhovaya sajen*, or "swinging fathom," is the length of the arms extended.—C.M.

ABBOTT'S MARCH-ROUTE FROM MERV TO KHIVA.*

(DIRECT ROUTE.)

"THE distance from Merv to Khiva is about 360 miles. The Turcomans accomplish the distance on horseback in six days, carrying the water for themselves and cattle, their own and their horses' food and clothing, on the crupper of their saddles. If it is considered that the horses' barley alone for this journey weighs 60 lbs., and the horse-clothing at least 20 lbs. more, this will not appear a very light feat. It is constantly performed, however, by the Turcomans.

"The aspect of the desert, or rather wilderness, from Merv to Khiva is that of a sandy plain, broken into the most irregular surface by deep pits and high mounds, the whole thinly sprinkled with bushes of three several kinds, between which grow wormwood and the camel-thorn. On approaching Khiva, the surface is often ploughed into ravines and ridges, whose course is north and south, giving some idea of abandoned watercourses, and traditionally reported to be old channels of the Oxus. It is more possible that they may have served such a purpose to the Moorgab, when, previous to the monopoly of its waters at Merv, it flowed into the Oxus; but my observation was too limited to enable me to decide the question. The ridges are gravelly, but there is no want of sand.

"Wells on this route are found at long intervals, in one case of 160 miles. The water is generally brackish, but there are exceptions; on approaching Khiva, there appeared a very thin sprinkling of grass, which our horses eagerly devoured. But no dependence is to be placed on the pasture of this wilderness, and the traveller must provide barley or *juwaree* sufficient to supply the place of fodder. The latter is preferable when the horses have been trained to eat it, 10 lbs. of juwaree being, in respect of nourishment, equal to 12 lbs. of barley."

* * * * *

Besides the direct route, stark across the desert, traversed by Abbott in his journey in 1840 from Merv to Khiva, there are several other roads, running first to the Oxus, and then

* Condensed from his *Journey from Herat to Khiva*.

turning along the Oxus to the oasis of Khiva. One of these, traversed by Shakespear in 1840, and Thomson in 1842, runs from Merv to Kablaki, on the Oxus (see Kostenko's routes), and afterwards along the river-bank to Khiva. The advantage of the river-roads over the direct route used by Abbott, is, the certainty of finding water the whole of the way after the Oxus is reached. Burnaby, referring to these in his *Ride to Khiva*, states that :—"The distance from Khiva to Merv is about 430 miles, and the time occupied by a caravan in performing this journey is 17 days. According to all accounts, troops, if supplied with a camel-train, can easily accomplish this march. The only part of the road trying to man and beast is the 170 miles' desert which lies between the Moorgab and the Oxus, but even here wells are to be found, and the longest interval traversed without water is 56 miles. A force despatched from Khiva to Merv would not have to undergo half the hardship experienced in the route (traversed by the Khivan expedition) from Kazala to Khiva. Indeed, the Khivans, under Mahommed Rabiss Khan, were able to take Merv; thus showing that even a badly-organised Asiatic force can perform the journey."

TASHKENT TO MERV.

		Versts.	
1.	Niazbash	19¾	Tashkent to Samarcand 272½ versts.
2.	Tashkent Station	22	
3.	Tcheenaz	22	
4.	Malek	17	
5.	Moursa-Rabat	33¾	
6.	Agatchleek	29¼	
7.	Outch-Tubai	20	
8.	Djeezak	14	
9.	Yanee Kurgan	23½	
10.	Sarayleek	15¾	
11.	A stone bridge	15¾	
12.	Djimbay	19¾	
13.	Samarcand	19¾	

		Versts.	
14.	Daoul	22	Samarcand to Bokhara 231 versts.
15.	Tchimbay	21½	
16.	Katee-Kurgan	22½	
17.	Kala-ee-Davoos	30	
18.	Kerminai	35	
19.	Mialik	18	
20.	Bouslan	28	
21.	Kooyook Mazar	25	
22.	Bokhara	29	
23.	Shar Islam	24	Bokhara to the Oxus, 152 versts.
24.	Karakool	32	
25.	Ardan	36	
26.	Dengees	28	
27.	Tchardjui	32	
28.	Kouttaminar	30	The Oxus to Merv 215 versts.
29.	Shirk-Rabat	30	
30.	Balgoui	25	
31.	Nizasher	60	
32.	Kaltcha	30	
33.	Merv	40	
	Total	870½ versts.	

FROM THE OXUS TO MERV.*

"The ground on the Turkestan side of the Oxus, opposite Tchardjui, is well irrigated for a breadth of three or four miles. Beyond, inland, is a belt of sand some fifteen miles in width, and wholly destitute of vegetation. Betik, opposite Tchardjui, is one of the greatest ferries between Persia and Turkestan. There is, therefore, every facility for crossing. Our beasts and baggage were thrown into boats, and soon transported to the opposite bank. The farmer of the customs told us that in 1831 the Oxus was frozen over from shore to shore, and the caravans crossed it on the ice. This was rather an unfrequent occurrence. The farmer paid 100 tillas a month

* Condensed from Burnes' *Bokhara*.

as rent for the ferry. The width of the river at Tchardjui we found to be 650 yards, and in some places 25 and 29 feet deep. Its banks were much depressed, and completely overgrown with a rank weed, which chokes the aqueduct. Some fish of an enormous size, weighing from 500 to 600 lbs., are procured in this river, a kind of dog-fish, which are used as food by the Uzbeks.

"Six miles from the Oxus is Tchardjui, which is in sight of the river. It is pleasantly situated on the verge of culture and desolation, with a pretty fort that crowns a hillock, and overlooks the town. It is said to have resisted the arms of Timour; but its present condition would not impress one with any great notions of its strength, or that conqueror's power. The people of Tchardjui do not exceed 4,000 or 5,000 souls; but a greater portion of its population wander up and down the Oxus during the hot months. It is the last inhabited spot of civilization between Bokhara and Persia. A bazaar is held here.

"At noon on the 22nd we left Tchardjui, and, before we had travelled a distance of two miles, entered upon the great desert which separates the kingdoms of Iran and Tooran. The mode of travelling in Turkestan is to start at mid-day, and march till sunset, and, after a couple of hours' rest and the indispensable cup of tea, to resume the task, and advance to the stage, which is usually reached at daylight. We made the usual evening halt, and then travelled till sunrise, when we reached Karoul, a well of brackish water, 30 feet underground, lined with branches of trees, at which we halted, a distance of 22 miles from Tchardjui. The whole tract presented to our view was a dreary waste of sand-hills, but by no means so destitute of vegetation and underwood as on the northern bank of the Oxus. There was a remarkable uniformity in the formation of the sand-hills; the whole of them preserved the shape and form of a horse-shoe, the outer rim presenting itself to the north, the direction from which the winds of this country blow. On this side the mounds sloped, while the interior of the figure was invariably precipitous; but loose sand will ever take its position from the prevailing winds. None of the hills exceeded the height of 15 or 20 feet, and they all rested on a hard base. When the wind was high, the particles of sand moved from one mound to another, wheeling in the eddy or interior of the semicircle, and having now and then, particularly under the rays of the sun, much the look of water; an appearance, I imagine,

which has given rise to the opinion of moving sands in a desert. The thermometer, which had risen to 100°, fell at night to 70° among the sand-hills. I have always observed that the vicissitudes of cold and heat are greatest among sand. The sand-hills were quite soft; but the sand was not dusty, and the camels slid down them with their burdens. Here and there we came upon a sheet of indurated clay, as if the sand-hills here also rested on a base of that kind. In these hollows, and on the brow of the hills, we found a shrub-like tamarisk, called *kasura*, also a kind of grass, or *bent*, called *salun*. There were likewise two thorny shrubs, called *kuzzak* and *karaghan*, neither of them the common camel-thorn, but on which the camels delighted to browse. There was no water throughout the whole march, and no signs of inhabitants but a ruined fort, that had once served as a look-out from the Oxus. The Indian deserts of Jaysulmeer and Parkur sank into insignificance before this vast ocean of sand. No sight is more imposing than a desert; and the eye rests with a deep interest on the long line of camels, as it winds its crooked course through the frightful waste. The simile of a ship on the ocean and a camel in the desert may be hackneyed, but it is just. The objects animate impart a strong interest to inanimate nature.

"As we reached our halting-ground in the morning, we had an opportunity of observing the number and composition of our caravan. There were upwards of 80 camels, and about 150 persons, several of them men of the first respectability, who accompanied their merchandise to the markets of Persia. Some travelled in panniers placed on camels; others rode, some on horses, many on donkeys; but every person, even the meanest, had some kind of conveyance. The horse-men preceded the camels; and, stretching themselves out on the sand with their bridles in their grasp, stole a few moments' sleep, till the caravan overtook them.

"In marching from Karoul we quitted the high road of the caravans, which leads to Merv, and proceeded westward into the desert, by a way that is altogether unfrequented. We had no option in the selection of such a route, since the officer who commanded the Khivan army" (Merv was then in the temporary possession of the Khivans) "sent a messenger to direct our march upon his camp. After the usual halt, we reached the well of Balgoui, 24 miles distant, on the morning of the 23rd. It was a small and single well, about four feet in diameter, as deep as that at Karoul; and the

Turcomans only discovered it after a zigzag search of some hours. We soon emptied it (for the water was good), and had to wait a night till it again filled.

"In this march the desert was overgrown with brushwood, but the tract was entirely destitute of water; and a few rats, lizards, and beetles, with here and there a solitary bird, were its only inhabitants. Some of the sand-hills now attained the height of 60 feet; but at that elevation they are invariably bare of all vegetation; which, I suppose, cannot thrive in such an exposed situation. The highest hills were about a distance of 8 miles from the halting-place, and named 'Sheer i shootr,' or the 'camel's milk,' from some allusion to that useful animal. There was nothing peculiar in the colour of the sand, which was quartzose. There was no turf, grass, or creeping plants; every shrub grew separately; and the grass was only to be found in clumps. The heat of the sand rose to 150°, and that of the atmosphere exceeded 100°, but the wind blew steadily, nor do I believe it would be possible to traverse this tract in summer time if it ceased to blow. The steady manner in which it comes from one direction is remarkable in this inland country; it is true, that in every direction except the north we have mountains, but they are too distant to impede the winds. Our caravan advanced at a firm and equal pace among the sand; nor can I discover that the progress of a camel is much impeded in the desert. They moved at the rate of two miles and one-eighth (3740 yards) in the hour.

"We had before heard of the deserts south of the Oxus; and had now the means of forming a judgment from personal observation. We saw the skeletons of camels and horses which had perished from thirst, bleaching in the sun. The nature of the roads or pathways admits of their easy obliteration; and, if the beaten path be once forsaken, the traveller and his jaded animal generally perish. A circumstance of this very nature occurred but a few days previous to our leaving Tchardjui. A party of three persons travelling from the Khivan camp lost the road, and their supply of water failed them. Two of their horses sank under the parching thirst; and the unfortunate men opened the vein of their surviving camel, sucked its blood, and reached Tchardjui from the nourishment thus derived. The camel died. These are facts of frequent occurrence. The Khan of Khiva, in his late march into the desert (against Merv), lost upwards of 2,000 camels, that had been loaded with water and provisions

for his men. He dug his wells as he advanced; but the supply of water was scanty. Camels are very patient under thirst: it is a vulgar error, however, to believe that they can live any length of time without water. They generally pine, and die on the fourth day; and, under great heat, will even sink sooner.

"After a day's detention to rest the camels, we marched at sunrise, and continued our progress, with a short halt, till the same time next day. We journeyed 35 miles, and alighted at a fetid well called Seerab; and from well to well we had no water. We appeared to have lost the great sand-hills in our advance westward. The desert, though it had the same features as before, now presented an undulating and uneven country of sand, partially covered with shrubs. The soil in some places was salt; but the water of the well was good enough after it was some time drawn.

"Our next march brought us at midnight to Oochghooee, or the Three Wells, which we had great difficulty in finding. We wandered to the right and left, and the Turcomans dismounted in the dark, and felt for the pathway with their hands among the sand. We had almost despaired of recovering it, and were preparing for our bivouac, when the bark of a dog, and a distant answer to our repeated calls, dispelled our anxiety, and we were soon encamped at the well. We here found a few wandering Turcomans, the first we had seen since leaving the Oxus. The water was bitter; but these shepherds seem indifferent to its quality. The country continued to change still further as we advanced, becoming more flat and free from sand, but still running in alternate ridges and hollows. In these we discovered some small, red, sharp-edged pebbles, not unlike iron pyrites; nor did the wells which were dug in them yet exceed the depth of 30 feet; in the Indian desert they are 300. The Turcomans rallying round us the next morning spoke of the piercing cold of the winter in this country; and assured us that the snow sometimes lay a foot deep. We ourselves had experienced a depression of 10 degrees in the temperature since leaving the Oxus.

"The Khan of Khiva's camp was on the banks of the Moorgab, or Merv river, considerably below the place of that name, and about 30 miles distant from us. We set out at noon, and by the time the sun had set, found ourselves among the ruins of forts and villages, now deserted, which rose in castellated groups over an extensive plain. I have

observed that we had been gradually emerging from the sand-hills; and these marks of human industry, which we had now approached, were the ancient remnants of civilization of the famous kingdom of Merv, or, as our historians have erroneously called it, Meroo. Before we had approached them, we had not wanted signs of our being delivered from the ocean of sand, since several flocks of birds had passed over us. As the mariner is assured by such indications that he nears land, we had the satisfaction of knowing that we were approaching the water, after a journey of 150 miles through a sterile waste, where we had suffered considerable inconvenience from the want of it. We were not yet within the pale of habitations; but after a cool and pleasant march, over a perfectly flat and hard plain, everywhere interspersed with forts and ruins, we found ourselves, about 9 on the following morning, at a large Turcoman camp near the banks of the Moorgab. The name of the place was Khwaju Abdoolla, and the whole colony sallied forth to meet the caravan. We took up a position on a hillock about 200 or 300 yards distant; and the merchants instructed us to huddle together among themselves and appear lowly and humble. We did so, and the Turcomans of the encampment soon crowded around us, begging for tobacco, for which they brought loads of the most luscious melons.

"On the morning of the 29th of August we moved at dawn, with buoyant spirits, and followed the course of the Moorgab for 12 miles before we could cross it. We found it about 80 yards wide and 5 feet deep, running within steep clayey banks, at the rate of five miles an hour. The country was covered with the camps of the Turcomans. The people cultivate by irrigation, and everything grows in rich luxuriance. The transition which we had experienced, from a sandy desert to the verge of a running stream, was most gratifying; everyone seemed delighted, and even the animals appeared to feel the change. Throughout the day the banks of the Merv river presented a spectacle of merriment and joy; the Turcomans plunging into the water with their horses, and the greater part of the caravan sporting about in the stream."

Burnes thus sums up his opinion of the desert lying between the Oxus and Merv:—"In a military point of view, the scarcity of water is a great obstacle. In some places the wells were thirty-six miles apart; and generally the water was both bitter and scanty. That which we had

transported with us from the Oxus was not less nauseous than the water of the desert; for it must be carried in skins, and these must be oiled to preserve them from bursting. The grease mixed with the water, which latterly became so tainted that the horses even refused to drink it. There is nothing of which we felt the want so much as good water. In the march, several people of the caravan, particularly the camel-drivers, were attacked with inflammation of the eyes; I suppose, from the sand, glare, and dust. With such an enumeration of petty vexations and physical obstacles, it is dubious if an army could cross the desert at this point. The heavy sandy pathways, for there are no roads, might certainly be rendered passable to guns, by placing brushwood on the sand: but there is great scarcity of grass for cattle, and the few horses which accompanied the caravan were jaded and worn out before they reached the river. A horse which travels with a camel has great injustice done to him; but an army could not outstrip the motions of a caravan, and fatigues would still fall heavily upon them. History tells us, that many armies have fought in and crossed this desert; but they consisted of hordes of light cavalry, that could move with rapidity. It is to be remembered, that we had not a foot-passenger in our party. Light horse might pass such a desert, by divisions, and separate routes; for besides the high-road to Merv, there is a road both to the east and to the west. It would, at all times, be a difficult task for a great body of men to pass from the Moorgab to the Oxus, since our caravan, of eighty camels, emptied the wells; and it would be easy to hide, or to even fill up these scanty reservoirs. Where water lies within thirty feet of the surface, an energetic commander may remedy his wants, since we have an instance of it in the advance of the Khivan Khan to the banks of the Moorgab."

General Ferrier, however, whose opinion as a military critic carries as much weight as Burnes', says that it would be possible for a Russian army to march from Tchardjui to Merv "and thence along the fertile and populous banks of the Moorgab to Herat. There would not be an obstacle of a serious nature to stop an army on its way to the river, and the desert situated between it and Merv offers no difficulties that cannot be surmounted; the Khans of Khiva and the Emirs of Bokhara have sufficiently proved this in their almost annual expeditions to seize upon Merv, some of which have been made at the head of ten to twelve thousand horse.

Would they have exposed themselves to the dangers mentioned by Burnes, if they had been of his opinion?"

Captain Burnaby also says that "the easiest route for the Russians to take Merv is that *viâ* Tchardjui. Two days is the longest time that the troops would be on the road without finding wells, whilst caravans go from Bokhara to Merv in 13 days. A Bokharan army, under Shah Murad, captured this stronghold of the Turcomans, and destroyed the dam of the river Moorgab, in order to impoverish the country. Where Bokharan troops can go Russian soldiers would have no difficulty in following, and the same force which has captured Samarcand would find little difficulty in overcoming any resistance the badly-armed but brave Turcoman hordes might be able to oppose."

HERAT TO MERV.*

"Dec. 24, 1839. Left Herat, and halted at a village near the Eed Gah.

"Dec. 25. Set out in the morning and halted at Purwana, in a high valley about 11 miles from Herat. The road lies between close hills, of no considerable height, and ascends the entire distance of Purwana.

"Dec. 26. Avoiding the more direct and difficult passes of the mountain ridge of Kytoo, we crossed that chain without accident, meeting neither dwelling nor tent, excepting two ruined Rabat (hospitia) in the valley, and descending some grassy heights, pitched at evening in a hollow, where we found a little water.

"Dec. 27. Rain in the morning. Looking in the direction of Kytoo we saw that mountain chain covered from summit to base with snow, and congratulated ourselves with no little thankfulness on having already passed this barrier, where travellers every year are lost in the snow. A very distressing cross-country path, over steep hills covered with grass, brought us to the rivulet Kooshk, which we ascended to the capital of that name. The valley here is picturesque and interesting. The low hills which form it, are quite

* Condensed from Abbott's *Herat to Khiva*.

naked, or produce only grass. Not a leaf is to be seen. Yet being fringed with the black tents of the Djemshidis, and peopled with living things, men, women, horses, and sheep, the contrast to the country just passed was strong and welcome. Kooshk has a few mud huts and a fort (so called), resembling a dilapidated farm-yard. The Djemshidis reckon their own number at 15,000 families, or 75,000 souls; but this is probably an exaggeration; for having now passed through about 50 miles of their country, I have scarcely seen a human being. The Djemshidis are of Toorkish descent, as their habits and physiognomy imply. They are short, stout, very dark, with decidedly Tartar features. Wherever water and soil are found, a little cultivation is maintained by them, but their wealth consists in flocks of sheep and herds of horses of Turcoman breed, generally received by them in exchange for slaves whom they capture in the Herat district. They are arrant cowards, and, like all Tartars, superstitiously fearful of artillery.

"Dec. 28. Passed down the valley of the Kooshk rivulet, averaging about half a mile in width, and bounded on either side by sloping grassy downs, sprinkled with flocks of sheep and goats. Under the low sunny cliffs and hills the Djemshidis had pitched their black tents in considerable numbers; and in the fields of the valley, hundreds of mares and colts were grazing. The scene was extremely pleasing. The valley is highly susceptible of culture, and has once been well tilled. Towards evening we halted at an *aoul*.

"Dec. 29. In the morning, resuming my course down the river valley, I passed a scene resembling that of the previous day. On the way, passed 'Kara Tepé,' or Black Mound, an artificial hill 150 feet in height crowned by a ruined circle of defences. It stands in the elbow of the valley, overlooked by lofty hills on the west. The bend of the valley is very wide, and Kara Tepé was not only girdled by black tents, but crowded by caravans from Merv, proceeding with grain for Kooshk. Beyond Kara Tepé are a few black tents; but large flocks of sheep are still met with. The shepherds come even from Merv to this pleasant valley, bringing water and all other necessaries on asses. Towards evening we reached a spot fitted for encampment, about two miles short of Kala Chummunie Bhayd. About 1,000 sheep were here; their value about 5 tenghas or 1s. 9d. each.

"Dec. 30. Leaving this spot at daybreak, we again followed the Kooshk rivulet. The scene continued unchanged,

excepting, perhaps, that not a human dwelling was visible. Large flocks of white sheep still sprinkled the hills on either side, but those hills were growing more arid and sandy as we advanced." The Kala or "castle of Chummie Bhayd is ruined and deserted. It presented a fine effect in the haze of the morning, guarding with its ragged ramparts the passage of the valley. A few miles further are the ruins of another castle called Howzi Khan, or the 'cistern of the chief.' Further on was the district of Baukiss, then 'Mowree, where we found the ruined castle, Kala-i-Mowr, having still one wretched cell capable of sheltering a traveller. An extensive system of underground canals (Kareezi) in the middle of the valley remains to attest its former high state of culture, and suggests the notion that in other days the waters of the rivulet were expended in irrigation, ere they could reach Kala-i-Mowr; at present this valley harbours not a living soul. We met not less than 6 or 7 caravans of grain from Merv. Here I was weak enough to yield to the entreaties of my people, and put up for the night in a reed jungle.

"Dec. 31. Starting with daylight, we tracked the Kooshk until its valley is lost in that of the Moorgab, or Awb-i-Mowr. We then ascended the latter river to the largest aoul or camp of Pendjdeh, passing the ruined vineyard and deserted fields of a once populous and cultivated district." The aoul consisted of "about 300 tents of the Yomood Turcomans, pitched in the form of two hollow squares.

"Jan. 1, 1840. My route lay along the left bank of the Moorgab, and I crossed by a bridge the dry channel of the Kooshk, at its junction with the former river. The cause of this failure of its waters I do not know. The Moorgab is here a deep stream of very pure water, about 60 feet in breadth, and flowing in a channel, mined to the depth of 30 feet in the clay soil of the valley, The banks are very precipitous, and fringed with tamarisk and a few reeds. The valley itself is, at Pendjdeh, about 9 miles in breadth, but narrows as we advance. Here it is about ¾ mile in breadth. On the east bank are sloping sandy hills, about 600 feet higher than the valley. On the west is the desert, a high sandy plain, overrun with low bushes and camel-thorn, and extending to the mountain barrier of Persia. The valley of the Moorgab has once been well cultivated, but is now from Pendjdeh to Youletan utterly deserted, owing to the late distractions of the country. It abounds in pheasants,

chuccores, and rock-pigeons. The panther and bear are also to be found. At long intervals are seen the ruins of buildings; but I observed not a black tent in the solitude. Towards evening I chose a spot for my camp amongst the brushwood, bordering the river, and excepting that the horses were occasionally frightened from their picquets by the sudden whirr of a pheasant, the night passed without accident."

"Jan. 2. Resuming my course with daylight, I passed by a good and much beaten road down the river valley. Scene as before. In the evening I found a well-sheltered spot among the tamarisk-trees, and settled there for the night." During the night the party were greatly disturbed by a panther prowling about the camp.

"Jan. 3. At sunrise pursued the course of the Moorgab. Met a caravan at every third mile, laden with wheat and barley from Merv. As I approached Youletan the desert aspect of the country was a little broken by symptoms of recent culture. After some further advance, a few mud walls became visible, and amongst them here and there a black Tartar tent. The road was now everywhere entangled amongst sluices and canals of running water. The aouls, or moveable villages of black tents, increased, and the valley opened widely on either side, being in fact a large plain bounded by the desert. Put up at the settlement of Muhummud Bumeen, the leading man of the district, a place consisting of 'a few low walls, two or three Turcoman tents, and a routie of blue cotton cloth.' I dismounted at the door of a black tent. A comfortable fire of wood embers burned in the centre. Bread, raisins, and sugar were brought, and were succeeded by some enormous melons, for which Merv is celebrated, and which I found very refreshing.

"Jan. 4. Continuing to pass over the sandy plain, I arrived, shortly after noon, near the Castle of Merv."

MERV TO SARAKHS.*

On the 31st of August, 1832, "we marched into the desert westward of the River Moorgab, from an encampment called Kunjookoolan, and made a progress of 37 miles. The tract was entirely different from the opposite side, and about the middle of the journey the desert changed into a level, hard, flat surface, which it ever afterwards preserved. The tract put me much in mind of the Run of Cutch, though there were patches of bushes, which are not to be seen in that most singular region. The country was destitute of water, but there are many remains of caravanserais and cisterns that had been built by Abdoolla Khan of Bokhara. In this neighbourhood, and more particularly while on the banks of the river, we witnessed a constant succession of whirlwinds, that raised the dust to a great height, and moved over the plain like waterspouts at sea. In India these phenomena are familiarly known as *devils*, where they sometimes unroof a house; but I have not seen them in that country either of such size or frequency as now prevailed in the Turcoman desert. They appeared to rise from gusts of wind, for the air itself was not disturbed but by the usual north wind that blows steadily in this desert.

"As we halted in the morning of the 1st of September, at a ruin which bore the name of Kalournee, we descried the hills of Persian Khorassan. In the direction where they rose I had observed the atmosphere to be clouded since we reached the banks of the Moorgab, and we might have perhaps seen them sooner, though they still appeared in the haze of distance. As we discovered these mountains at sunrise, a magnificent mirage shone in the same direction. One could trace a river, and its steep and opposite banks; but as the sun ascended, the appearance vanished, and left the same flat and cheerless country in which we were now encamped. The high banks of the river had no existence, and the water was but vapour set in the rays of light.

"As we approached Sarakhs, we could distinguish a gradual, though almost imperceptible rise in the country. We exchanged the shrubs that I have before described (see Oxus to Merv) for the tamarisks and the camel's thorn, which

* Condensed from Burnes' *Bokhara*.

does not grow in the desert. The most singular of the plants which a new zone presented to us, was one called *gykchenak* in the Toorkee language, which literally means, the deer's cup. It grows like hemlock or assafœtida (and has as bad a smell), only that a leaf, shaped precisely like a cup, surrounds each knot, or division of the plant's stalk. In this natural bowl the rains of spring are collected, and supply the deer with water. Such is the popular belief, and such is the name. We afterwards saw a plant not unlike the deer's cup among the hills eastward of Meshed. A gum, like tallow, exuded from it, and it shot up as an annual among the high lands."

"We reached Sarakhs on the 2nd, after having performed a journey of 70 miles in 44 hours, including every halt. During this period we had only marched for 32 hours, and the camels sometimes stepped out at the rate of 2½ miles an hour, which I had never seen before. All the camels were males, since they are believed to undergo fatigue better than females."*

SARAKHS.

"If England does not use Sarakhs for defence, Russia will use it for offence."—Colonel C. M. McGregor.

"Sarakhs is considered by the Persians to be one of the four chief cities of Khorassan. From its situation in the desert between Meshed and Merv, its possession is a matter of necessity to an invader approaching from either side with the purpose of possessing himself of one or other of the above-mentioned cities."† When Fraser visited Khorassan in 1825 it was the "principal residence of a branch of the Salor tribe, many of which pitch their tents round the few inhabited houses that remain of Sarakhs. It being upon the principal road from Meshed to Bokhara and Balkh, caravans from all these places generally pass through it, and even those from Khiva, when they go by the way of Merv, frequently make

* March-routes from Krasnovodsk and Tchikishlar to Merv are given in my *Disastrous Turcoman Campaign*.
† Watson's *History of Persia*.

the angle and take this route. It is a great mart for horses and camels, and there are fairs held at stated times, where may be had the choicest animals from the best breeds of the desert. Hakim Khan and his clan pay a nominal and very imperfect obedience to the Persian authorities at Meshed, but he possesses very little influence with his own people, and the best security for their conduct is the residence of several members of the principal families in Meshed and Teheran. In spite of this they frequently join in predatory excursions with other tribes."

On the occasion of Wolff's visit to Persia in 1831, he found that the heir-apparent, Abbas Meerza, with 20,000 troops, accompanied by Major Stokes, Captain Shee, and five English sergeants, had marched to Meshed "to put an end to slave-making at Sarakhs and exterminate the Khans of Khorassan." On reaching Meshed, he says, "the Turcomans in the deserts of Sarakhs, Merv, and Khiva were all afraid of Abbas Meerza, and consequently 16 Aksakals had arrived as deputies from the rest of the Turcomans at the palace of Abbas Meerza in Meshed, in order to make a treaty. At their interview every one of the deputies was, in the first place, presented with a red garment, called *khelat*. Arrayed in this they stood outside his window, whilst he sat on a throne in his room, near the window, when he thus addressed them :—'I am glad that you are come here, because I am determined to put a stop to slave-making; I have therefore written down the conditions of the treaty I will make with you, and which are as follows : —First, you must sign a pledge that you will not any more make slaves. Secondly, that you will receive from me an agent, who shall reside at Sarakhs, the chief emporium of slavery, and he must watch your movements. He is himself a Turcoman from Astrabad, and his name is Goolij Muhummad Khan. Thirdly, I shall keep two of you as hostages, who must remain with me until Joseph Wolff shall have been safely conducted to Bokhara; and after he has arrived there, and you have produced from him a certificate that he has been well treated by you, and is safely in Bokhara, then the two hostages will be allowed to return to their own country. You must now come in and put your hands into Wolff's hand, as a mark of friendship, and stroke your beards.' Then the deputies entered the room, and everyone of them approached Wolff, who was seated near Abbas Meerza, with his legs stretched out, for Wolff was never able to learn to sit like an Eastern. All the Turcomans in succession then

put their hands into Wolff's, and then slowly drew them out, and stroked their beards, in token of agreement to these terms."

According to Watson the Sarakhs Turcomans were not charged with slave-making so much as with "being in the habit of supplying arms to other tribes, to be used against the Persians: in return for the arms, or other commodity, they received many Persian prisoners." But Watson, a dull and feeble writer, does not appear to have been at much pains to write a really good history of Persia, or he would have referred to Burnes, who expressly states that while at Sarakhs, in 1832, he saw an "Alaman that had rode up to the very walls of Meshed at ten in the morning, and had captured 115 human beings, 200 camels, and as many cattle. They all had swords, most had light long lances, quite different from those used by the Uzbeks, and a few had small matchlocks. Their horses looked quite done up, and walked as if on beds of gravel; but they had been thirteen days in motion, with scanty food and much work. While we admire the courage of these men, what shall we think of the 20,000 Persians, who were encamped within two days' journey of Meshed, under the Heir-Apparent?"

Burnes further tells us that he was agreeably surprised to find the Salor clan living at Sarakhs in a state of luxury, and he then goes on to describe their settlement as "consisting of a small and weak fort, almost in ruins, situated on a hillock, under cover of which most of the inhabitants have pitched their tenements. There are a few mud-houses, which have been built by the Jews of Meshed, who trade with these people; but the Turcomans themselves live in the conical houses peculiar to their tribe. Sarakhs is the residence of the Salor Turcomans, the noblest of the race. Two thousand families are here domiciled, and an equal number of horses, of the finest blood, may be raised in case of need. If unable to cope with their enemies, these people flee to the deserts, which lie before them, and await the termination of the storm. They pay a sparing and doubtful allegiance to Khiva and Persia, but it is only an impending force that leads to their submission. When we were at Sarakhs they had a Persian ambassador in chains, and refused to grant a share of the transit duties to the Khan of Khiva, which they had promised in the preceding month, when that chief was near them. These are commentaries on their allegiance. The Salor Turcomans are ruled by twelve *aksakals*, the heads of the

different families; but they acknowledge no particular allegiance to any individual person. The country around Sarakhs is well watered by aqueducts from the rivulet of Tedjend, which is a little brackish; but its waters are usefully employed in fertilising its fields. The soil is exceedingly rich, and possesses great aptness for agriculture: the seed is scattered, and vegetates almost without labour. The harvest is rich, and they reap it, like true republicans, without a tax. The inhabitants repeat a tradition, that the first of men tilled in Sarakhs, which was his garden, while Serendib, or Ceylon, was his house! There is not a tree or a bush to enliven the landscape, for the Turcomans despise gardening. The crops of wheat and juwaree are here most abundant, and the melons are only inferior to those of Bokhara."

Shortly after Burnes' visit "Abbas Meerza," says Watson, "appeared before Sarakhs, which contained 3,000 Persian captives, and summoned it to surrender. In reply, Adina Khan, one of the chiefs of the Salor tribe, proceeded to the camp of the prince, taking with him the wives and children of a number of Turcomans who had previously been sent as hostages to Persia. The chief of the Salors agreed to liberate the Persian captives on receiving back the hostages, and his proposals were emphasized by the tears and entreaties of the women and children. But these failed to make any impression on the prince, who informed the chief that the hostages were not in his camp, and who went so far as to detain Adina Khan and those he had brought with him; the Persian commander being of opinion that men-stealers, such as the Turcomans, were not entitled to the benefit of the usages established for war between civilized nations. The Persian artillery opened fire on the city, and the Turcomans thereupon had recourse to the expedient of placing their Sheeah captives—men, women and children—in such a position as that they should be exposed to the full effects of the fire of the besiegers. This device caused the prince to suspend for a time the cannonade from his artillery. But he was roused to fresh measures against the Turcomans by the perusal of a petition which he received from his father's captive subjects, imploring him to rescue them from a captivity in which they were constantly exposed to hear the Sheeah faith blasphemed, and to see the wives violated. Adina Khan was sent into the city as the bearer of the prince's ultimatum; which was, that the place should be surrendered to him, unconditionally, within one hour, or that it should feel the effects of his

power. The hour elapsed, and the prince gave his troops the order to assault Sarakhs, and to execute the Katl-i-am, or general massacre upon its stubborn inhabitants. The onset did not terrify the brave tribesmen of Salor, who met the assailants with the Sunni war-cry 'La Allah-il-Allah'; but the Turcomans were overcome, their chief was slain, and no quarter was asked by the vanquished, or offered by the victors. For the space of one hour the carnage raged, but at the end of that time the hunger after plunder prevailed over the thirst for blood, and the soldiers left off slaughtering in order that they might secure the spoil with as little delay as possible. The riches found at Sarakhs are said to have exceeded all computation, and the troops were permitted to retain for themselves whatever fell into their hands. 450 slave-dealers were given over to the liberated slaves, by whom they were torn in pieces, and after the walls of Sarakhs had been levelled with the ground, the prince turned back towards Meshed. His successes had inspired such terror throughout Central Asia, that it is said Turanian mothers could hush their children by pronouncing the dreaded name of Abbas.

"In this manner Sarakhs was conquered, but the declared intention with which the Crown Prince had set out from Ispahan, of reasserting by force the right of the Shah to all the country lying between Khorassan and the Oxus, had not been carried into execution; not even Merv had been occupied by the troops of Abbas. However, he was enabled in some measure to carry out the instructions he had received from the Shah. Five thousand prisoners of the tribe of Salor still remained in his camp; for their ransom the Khan of Khiva offered to pay the sum of fifty thousand toomans. Abbass Meerza consented to liberate them only upon the condition that he should receive, besides the ransom-money, a paper wherein it was stipulated that Persian merchants proceeding to Central Asia should be conducted as far as the Oxus by guards of the Salor tribe, who should be resposible for their safety; that that tribe should undertake to prevent the Turcomans of the tribes of Tekke and Sarik from making incursions into Khorassan; that if they could not in all instances effectually prevent these incursions, they should at any rate give timely notice to the nearest Persian authorities to take measures for their own defence; that they should agree never to receive or have any dealings with slave-dealers of any country; and finally, that they

should consent to furnish tribute and horsemen to the Shah at stated intervals. These conditions were accepted by the Turcomans, who probably had no intention at all of adhering to them; but the document in which they were embodied remained in the hands of the Prince, and the honour of the Persian Government was vindicated."

Colonel C. M. McGregor gives an excellent account of modern Sarakhs, which needs no amplification from other sources:—

"The fort of Sarakhs has a garrison of one battalion of infantry numbering some 700 men, eleven guns, good, bad, and indifferent, and a few horsemen; but the dimensions of the fort are such that it would take ten times this number to man the walls even in the most inefficient manner. Its trace is that of an irregular polygon, with eleven bastions and numerous intermediate towers for musketry. On the south is the arg or citadel, which is a similar work to the above, cut off as it were from a part of its walls. In the citadel are quarters for infantry and artillery, but many of the former live in lines in the centre of the fort. There is a sort of bazaar inside the fort, and numerous detached enclosures and hovels, where members of the garrison live. Some of the men have their wives with them, but this luxury is chiefly confined to the higher ranks; and there are a few, very few, artisans and shop-keepers. Outside the fort are a number of Turcoman towers, and round each of these is a small patch of ground, cultivated by the men of the garrison and watered from wells. The soil is everywhere of a light sandy nature, but as there is abundance of water at adepth of about 20 feet, no doubt it would be capable of affording large crops. Were the Turcoman question for ever at rest, I see no reason why Sarakhs should not become a place of considerable importance, as a large population could easily be supported by agriculture alone, and its convenient position with reference to Meshed and Herat in the south, and Khiva and Bokhara on the north, marks it out as a future probable intrepôt of commerce. With regard to its strategical importance, I think a glance at the map will show that in the complications, which must arise ere the Russo-Indian question can be deemed settled, its future is likely to be a stirring one. Placed at the junction of roads from Herat and Meshed, by the Heri Rood and Ab-y-Meshed valleys respectively; and at the best entrance to the province of Khorassan from the north, it cannot fail to

exercise a very serious influence on the momentous issue of the above question. This must happen, whether it falls into the hands of the friends of England or into those of her foes. Whether Russia uses Sarakhs as a base for offensive measures against Herat, or England as a defensive outpost to defeat any such operations, that position will be heard of again. And if my feeble voice can effect a warning ere it is too late, let it here be raised in these words: If England does not use Sarakhs for defence Russia will use it for offence. Commercially, it is admirably situated for drawing to it all the trade between Turkestan on the north and Khorassan on the south; and it has every advantage of soil and water and climate that would be necessary for these purposes."

THE BEST ROAD FROM THE CASPIAN TO MESHED, FOR HERAT.*

"THERE are three roads from Astrabad to Meshed.

"1. *Viâ* Kyatool, Fenderesk, Semelgan, Budjnurd, and Kuchan.

"2. *Viâ* Shahrood, Sebzevar, and Nishapoor.

"3. *Viâ* Shahrood, Biyar, Tavroon, Toormeez, and Toorbet-i-Hyderi.

"No. 2 is the shortest: excluding the stage between Astrabad and Shahrood it is the most level: Consul Bakouline did the whole distance from Shahrood to Meshed in a carriage: lacks a good supply of water, none existing from Shahrood to Meiamei (37 miles), nor from Miandesht to Abbassabad (23 miles): lacks forage and fuel from Shahrood to Meshed: finally, suffers from the impediment of extremely difficult passes from Astrabad to Tash, 45 miles.

"No. 3. Said to be fit only for caravans; runs alongside the great salt desert; lacks water, fuel, and forage. Did not traverse it myself, but heard nothing but bad about the route.

* Condensed from General Petroosevitch's *Roads from Astrabad to Meshed*, Tiflis, 1880.

"No. 1: the most northern. From Astrabad to the village of Naoo-Dekh, in the Fenderesk district, the road traverses a plain, cut by mountain streams and irrigation canals, watering rice-fields. Dense virgin forests everywhere. No regular road between the villages; tracks varying yearly according to the position of the rice-fields. In the summer people travel along winding paths, running through the fields; and in winter, direct across the fields themselves. Road soft from frequent rains, and at places boggy; the morasses may be easily avoided, however, by making circuits. Water, fuel, and forage in abundance. From Naoo-Dekh to Budjnurd the road passes Goklan camps and the town of Semelgan (38 miles from Budjnurd: the total distance being about 115 miles); is cut by mountain valleys, giving birth to the sources of the Goorgan and the Khezar-Tcheshme. In proceeding from Semelgan to Budjnurd the road passes over the Aladagh ridge, separating the two valleys with the above names. As far as Semelgan water, wood, and forage plentiful; beyond to Budjnurd forests gradually disappear, and there is no grass whatever. From Budjnurd to Sheervan Consul Bakouiine travelled in a carriage. From Budjnurd to Meshed neither forage nor fuel, but water exists.

"In this manner, of the three roads running from Astrabad to Meshed the 2nd, or shortest, would be the best but for the 38 miles of mountainous country intervening between Astrabad and Tash. The preference, in consequence, must be given to the northern one (No. 1), as it is fit for vehicular traffic throughout. Between the 3 routes are connecting roads enabling travellers to pass from one to another, but at the expense of traversing mountain ridges. These roads, however, in cases, can be made use of by wheeled traffic."

Astrabad to Herat .	570 miles.
Herat to Peshawur .	900 „
In all	1470 „

ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN MAPS OF THE PERSO-TURCOMAN BORDER.

When Colonel Valentine Baker arrived at Tiflis on his way to the Atrek, he visited the Topographical Department there, then, as now, under the charge of Colonel Stebnitzsky, "a most intelligent officer, who had been at the head of the Survey Department with Colonel Markozoff's column when it marched from Krasnovodsk to Kizil Arvat. Instead of the secresy I had been led to expect, the most recent surveys were shown to us. I was perfectly astonished at the work done by this department. We saw most beautiful maps of the Caucasus on a scale of 20 versts, 10 versts, and even 5 versts to the inch. A copy of Colonel Stebnitzsky's surveys east of the Caspian, which had just been worked out, was, through the kindness of Prince Mirsky, presented to us, and proved most useful afterwards. But what was most interesting to me was a new map of Persia, embracing a part of Afghanistan, and much more complete than anything in the possession of the English Topographical Department."

Compare this with what Baker says on reaching the North Persian frontier:—"Only those who have travelled long and far in Persia can imagine how refreshing it is to come across a plentiful supply of good water at every few miles; and this is the character of the entire northern slope of the Kuren Dagh range. What a splendid country this would be under settled rule! But Persia seems to take no trouble in maintaining her frontier. Unless some action is taken it appears likely soon to lapse into Russian hands, and will thus give them a perfectly level, rich, and well-watered highway from the Caspian to Herat, with forts that only want occupying along the entire line. Yet we seem ready to allow this part of Persia to pass away from her without a remonstrance; and so defective is our topographical knowledge, that we scarcely realize that this *is* Persia, and arguments upon the point are common in the daily papers between disputants on Central Asian affairs. No European foot had ever before passed along this route, and no Russian had ever penetrated here. There is an intense pleasure in feeling that you have got to entirely new ground. This pleasure was greatly enhanced when we hurried to our maps

that we had brought from England,—the very latest productions of the Topographical Department, supposed to be secret treasures, and upon which our diplomatic arrangements with the Russian Government were being made—and found that they were utterly useless, giving no idea whatever of the geographical features of the country. So entirely incorrect were they, that we threw them on one side. They gave us no guidance whatever, and were simply misleading at every step. And yet we wonder that we have boundary questions constantly to refer to arbitration, which are invariably decided against us."

The accuracy of the above, no one acquainted with the English and Russian Topographical Departments will dispute. What Colonel Baker wrote in 1874 still holds good to-day. Maps of Central Asia, of the most elaborate workmanship and filled with information down to the latest date, can be bought for a shilling or two at the Map Department of the Russian Etat Major, while English map-makers are content to issue maps, at five or ten times the cost, which ought long ago to have been relegated to the British Museum. In this matter the negligence and sloth of the English Government, and the inactivity of the Geographical Society, are as much to be deplored as the want of enterprise displayed by private map-makers. Lord Salisbury, when Secretary of State for India, insisted on the necessity of people studying "big" maps. He would have done better to have held his tongue, and seen the India Office properly supplied with *good* ones.

MODERN EXPLORERS OF TURKMENIA.

1819. Captain Mouravieff.
1821. James Baillie Fraser.
1825. Lieutenant Berg.
1829. Lieutenant Arthur Conolly.
1831. Joseph Wolff.
1832. Lieutenant Alexander Burnes.
1837. Baron Bode.
1840. Major Abbott.
1840. Richmond Shakespear.
1843. Taylour Thomson.
1840. Flores Naselli.
1844. Joseph Wolff.
1845. Ferrier.
1848. Baron Bode.
1863. Arminius Vámbéry.
1872. Colonel Stebnitzsky.
1872. Captain Marsh.
1873. Colonel Valentine Baker.
1874. Captain Napier.
1875. Colonel C. M. McGregor.
1875. Captain Burnaby.
1876. Captain Butler.
1878. Captains Butler and Napier, Colonel Grodekoff and General Petroosevitch,
1879. Captain Napier, Mr. O'Donovan.

TURCOMAN CHRONOLOGY.*

328 B.C. Merv founded by Alexander the Great.

420 A.C. The Christian Archbishopric of Merv made a Metropolitan see.

704. Kuteïbe, the Arab chief, marched from Merv against Balkh and took it.

705. Kuteïbe crossed the Oxus with 21,000 men and plundered Samarcand.

711. Kuteïbe, having conquered Bokhara, subjugated Ferghana and Kashgaria.

714. Kuteïbe, having revolted at Merv against the Khalif was abandoned by his troops and slain.

715. Yezid bin Mohallib appointed his successor as Governor of Khorassan.

724. The Turks in Transoxania rose against the Arabs and occupied Samarcand, but Djendeb marched against them from Merv with 43,000 men and defeated them. Returning afterwards to Merv, he soon died there.

743. Nasr bin Seyyar appointed Governor of Khorassan: in 746, overthrown.

767. Mokanna, the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, began to promulgate his doctrines at Merv. Being driven from Merv, he fled to Turkestan.

777. Mu'az bin Muslim appointed by the Khalif Governor of Khorassan to put down the new sect. With a large army he marched from Merv to Turkestan. Was at first defeated by Mokanna's followers, but afterwards cooped up and besieged the Veiled Prophet at Kesh (Kitab). The slowness of the siege induced the Khalif to supersede him in 779 by Said ul Djarshi; and, two years later (781), Mokanna, in despair of escape, committed suicide by throwing himself into a furnace.

874. The Arab rule in Central Asia came to a close.

903. Bokhara became the ascendant state in Central Asia, and the mistress of Merv.

* The author does not put this forth as exhaustive. It is simply a rough collection of dates, derived from innumerable sources, which, especially towards the close, will be found useful for purposes of reference by writers on Central Asia.

1004. The dynasty of the Samanides came to a close. Rise of the Seldjukides.

1030. The Seldjukides, forced to quit Turkestan, appear in the neighbourhood of Merv.

1035. The Seldjukides conquer Merv and Khorassan.

1128. The power of the Seldjukides ceases.

1220. The Mongols sack Merv: 100,000 people slain.

1221. The Mongols, in besieging Koonia Oorgentch (in Khiva) destroyed the dam of the Oxus, which thereupon flowed from the Aral to the Caspian.

1505. The Uzbeks occupy Merv.

1510. The Persians destroyed the Uzbek army and killed Sheibani Mahommed under the walls of Merv: occupied the city.

1558. Master Anthony Jenkinson landed at Mangishlak, in the Caspian (Sep. 3), on his way from Russia to Bokhara across the Turcoman deserts. Dec. 23: arrived at Bokhara; April 28, 1559: at Mangishlak again.

1570. The Oxus flowed again into the Aral instead of into the Caspian.

1698. Birth of Nadir Shah, also called Nadir Kuli; was descended from the Karakli branch of the Afshar or Aushar tribe of Turcomans.

1716. Peter the Great sent Prince Bekovitch with 6,000 troops in 69 vessels to the Caspian. Three forts erected: St. Peter's on Cape Tup Karaghan, Fort Alexander in the Gulf of Bekterli Eeshan, and Fort Bekovitch on the Krasnovodsk promontory, at the entrance to Balkan Bay.

1716. Occupation of Akhal by the Tekkes.

1717. Bekovitch's fatal march to Khiva. Defeated the Khivans, but being lured, under offers of submission, to their capital, he allowed his troops to be scattered, and in a general massacre they were cut to pieces and himself beheaded.

1723. Captain Bruce surveyed the east shore of the Caspian.

1738. Captain Elton's journey to the Caspian.

1741. Captain Woodruffe's journey to the Caspian.

1781. A Russian squadron, consisting of four frigates and two armed sloops, anchored in the Bay of Ashrof.

1784. The Emir Maasum (Beggy Jan) mounted the throne of Bokhara.

1787. The Emir killed Baïrum Ali Khan, Persian governor of Merv, and occupied the city.

1789. Evrenkoff, a Russian under-officer, penetrated to Merv.

1794. Merv rased to the ground, its dam destroyed, and the people deported to Bokhara.

1819. Captain Mouravieff (afterwards the conqueror of Kars) traversed the Turcoman desert, *en route* for Khiva.

1821–22. J. B. Fraser's travels in Khorassan.

1825. Colonel (afterwards Field-Marshal) Berg landed at Mangishlak, but failed to reach Khiva.

1828. Russia became sole mistress of the Caspian by the Treaty of Turkomantchai.

1829. Lieutenant Arthur Conolly's overland journey to India.

1830. Ten thousand Tekke families migrated from Akhal to the Tedjend, under Oraz Khan.

1831. Wolff the missionary visited Merv.

1832. The Khivans conquered Merv.

1832 Alexander Burnes arrived at Merv (Aug. 29).

1833. The Persians conquered Sarakhs from the Salor Turcomans.

1834. The Tekkes occupied Merv.

1837. Baron Bode's travels on the east shore of the Caspian.

1839. Perovsky, Nov. 16, set out from Orenburg against Khiva, with 5,000 troops and 10,000 camels. On attaining Ak Bolak, 300 miles from Khiva, only 2,000 camels remained alive, and he had to retreat.

1840. Major Abbott passed through Merv, journeying from Herat to Khiva.

1840. Richmond Shakespear ditto ditto.

1841. Russia occupied Ashoorada.

1842. Murder of Stoddart and Conolly (June 24) by the Emir of Bokhara.

1843. Medemi Khan, of Khiva, while encamped at Merv, killed by Turcoman horsemen who had penetrated the camp.

1843. Thomson passed through Merv on his way to Khiva.

1844. Wolff passed through Merv on his way from Meshed to Bokhara, to ascertain the fate of Stoddart and Conolly.

1845. Ferrier's travels in Khorassan.

1848. Baron Bode's second visit to Transcaspiana.

1856. Abdullah, Khan of Khiva, killed in an attack on Yomood Turcomans. Seid Mahomed, the present ruler, ascended the throne.

1861. Defeat of 20,000 Persians sent to occupy Merv, and capture of the entire army by the Tekkes.

1863. March 28. Arminius Vámbéry set out from Teheran to explore Central Asia. April 12, arrived at Gomush Tepe; June 3, at Khiva. Journeyed up the Atrek in May.

1869. November: occupation of Krasnovodsk by General Radetsky and Colonel Stolietoff.

1870. Insurrection of the Mangishlak Kirghiz; Fort Alexandrovsk besieged; Colonel Rukin, to avoid capture, shot himself; garrison ultimately relieved.

Occupation of Michaelovsk and Mulla Kara, and erection of forts there.

1871. The Turcomans attacking Michaelovsk, the Russians in retaliation, crossed the desert to Kizil Arvat and destroyed it.

November: Colonel Markozoff occupied Tchikishlar. The Turcomans diverted the Atrek at Bend.

1872. Double expedition: Colonel Stolietoff marched from Krasnovodsk to Kizil Arvat, and Colonel Markozoff from Tchikishlar to Khoja Kala. The latter reached Beurma, then, retreating to Kizil Arvat, penetrated to Igdy, where, being attacked by the Turcomans, and losing his camels, he retired down the Atrek, constructing on his way an earthwork at Bayat-Khaji, four marches from Tchikishlar.

Captain Marsh travelled through Khorassan to Herat. See *A Ride through Islam*.

1873. Invasion of Khiva. Two columns left the Caspian: Markozoff's, after reaching Igdy, collapsed, and had to retreat disastrously to Krasnovodsk; Lomakin's, from Fort Alexandrovsk, was successful. June 10: Khiva fell. In July and August, Kaufmann conducted his campaign in the "Circassian style" against the Yomood Turcomans.

Nov.: Formation of the region beyond the Caspian into the "Trans-Caspian Military District," with seat of administration at Krasnovodsk; General Lomakin being appointed Governor.

Colonel Valentine Baker explored the Atrek region. See *Clouds in the East*.

1874. Colonel Ivanoff, Commander of Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk, in the Khivan oasis, ravaged the Yomood Turcoman territory, and consolidated Russia's power on the Oxus.

Captain Napier explored Khorassan and the edge of the Turcoman region.

Colonel Tillo explored the country between the Aral and the Dead Bay.

1875. Colonel C. M. McGregor explored Khorassan.

Captain Burnaby's Ride to Khiva (reached Khiva in Jan. 1876).

Colonel Ivanoff repeated his raids against the Yomoods, and completely destroyed their power.

Sofi Khan, chief of Kizil Arvat, visited Lomakin at Krasnovodsk. Lomakin made a reconnaissance as far as Sari Kamish; and thence, south, to Tchikishlar.

1876. The Tekkes attacked the Turcomans friendly to Russia living near Krasnovodsk. Defeat of a detachment sent by Lomakin to Kizil Arvat.

Captain Butler visited Khorassan.

1877. General Lomakin, advancing upon Kizil Arvat, again defeated by the Tekkes.

Death of Kooshoot Khan, of Merv; succeeded by Baba Khan, his son (English version), by Noor Verdi Khan, of Akhal (Russian and more probable version).

1878. Lomakin's great campaign against the Tekkes. Having reached Khoja Kala, was compelled to make a disastrous retreat to the Caspian.

Captain Butler and Captain Napier visited Khorassan.

Colonel Grodekoff rode from Samarcand to Herat, and, afterwards, through Khorassan to the Caspian.

1879. Second great campaign against the Tekkes, conducted by Lazareff and Lomakin. April: Lazareff arrived at Tchikishlar and visited Tchat and Krasnovodsk, thence proceeded to Tiflis. April 19: Action beyond Boornak between Russians and Tekkes—the former repulsed with loss of 500 camels. May: extensive Russian war preparations. June 3: arrival of Lazareff at Tchikishlar. June 19: departure of the Advanced Guard. July: delays at Tchikishlar. August 11: Main Body commenced to march. Aug. 26: death of Lazareff at Tchat, and assumption of command by Lomakin. Aug. 31: Council of War at Khoja Kala, and decision to invade Akhal. Sept.: the Russians entered Akhal by the Bendesen Pass. Sept. 9: Battle of Dengeel Tepe; repulse of the Russians, with 450 killed and wounded; retreat the next morning. Sept. 19: the retreating army reached Bendesen. Oct. 5: General Tergoukasoff reached Tarsakan and assumed the command of the army. Oct. 31: the remains of the army reached Tchikishlar. Nov.–Dec.: removal of the remains to the Caucasus.

1880, Jan. 7: Capture of a Russian convoy by Tekkes near Tchat. Jan. 30: Tergoukasoff resigned the command of the Trans-Caspian army and was succeeded by Major-General Mouravieff. Feb. 27: engagement between Russians and some Tekkes commanded by Tekme Sardar, near Douz Oloum—25 Tekkes killed. Execution, by the Tekkes, of Sofi Khan, of Kizil Arvat, reported. March 31: General Lomakin relieved of the Governorship of the Trans-Caspian region, and succeeded by General Petroosevitch. April 12: departure of General Skobeleff for Tiflis, where he arrived April 25; the next day being gazetted commander of the active army across the Caspian. May 25: arrival of Skobeleff at Tchikishlar; attack of Tekkes on Kuchan reported. June 2: advance of Skobeleff from Tchikishlar with 2,500 infantry, cavalry, and artillery, not including reserves.

June 23. Occupation of Bami, in the Akhal oasis, and construction of a fort. Russian force reported to consist of 9 companies, 9 squadrons, and 12 guns. June 28: successful reconnaissance of Beurma and Artchman by Skobeleff. July 8: Doctor Studitsky killed by Tekkes in the Bendesen defile, 12 Cossacks defending him for eight hours against 300 Tekkes. July 13: Skobeleff advanced against Geok Tepe with two companies, three sotnyas, four horse and two mountain guns, four metrailleurs, and eight rockets. July 17: unsuccessful bombardment of the aoul; the Russians expending their ammunition had to retreat, followed back to Bami (July 22) by the Tekkes. August: commencement of the Michaelovsk-Kizil-Arvat railway; reconnoitring of the region between Tchat and Askabat, south of the Kopet Dagh; great war preparations at Krasnovodsk, under the control of Petroosevitch. September: the Tekkes attacked Khoja Kala and Bendesen and carried off many stores; completion of 20 miles of railway to Mulla Kari; electric lights sent to Krasnovodsk, to be used during the debarkation of the troops. October: force under Skobeleff's command, eight battalions, three squadrons, and three batteries; visit of Colonel Grodekoff to the Perso-Turcoman frontier. Dec.: Skobeleff advanced against Geok Tepé. Dec. 15: Samoursk occupied. Dec. 24: Kouropatkin arrived at Geok Tepé from Samarcand.

1881, Jan. 1: storming of Yangi Kala. Jan. 4: siege of Geok Tepé commenced. Jan. 24: capture of Geok Tepé. Jan. 30: occupation of Askabat. Feb. 9: the *Standard* published the secret Cabul despatches.

TURCOMAN GLOSSARY.

Man	Urkuts.	Snow	Kar.
Woman	Ailehee.	Rain	Yughish.
Daughter	Kiz.	Thunder	Gok-gooburdee.
Son	Ooglee.	Heaven	Gok.
Vizier	Kooshbegee.	Lightning	Yeldrum.
Bird	Looke.	Horse	Al.
Sea	Durya.	Camel	Doya.
Mountain	Dugh.	Cow	Sughur.
Earth	Yerr.	Goat	Guchee.
Wheat	Booghdye.	Sheep	Koyaon.
Barley	Arfa.	Salt	Tooz.
Melon	Koon.	Sand	Koom.
Water	Soo.	Mud	Lace.
Fire	Ote.	Milk	Sood.
Cold (adj.)	Souts.	Stone	Dash.
Hot	Issee.	Death	Sukulat.
Sun	Goon.	Marriage	Toee.
Moon	Arje.	I	Oozoom.
Star	Yooldooz.	You	Sun.
Sword	Ghilich.	Sleep	Okhee.
Musket	Doofung.	Boat	Gumee.
Carpet	Palus.	Silk	Yepuk.
Father	Ata.	Good	Yukhshee.
Mother	Cija.	To lose	Yettee.
Brother	Ceneeng.	To kill	Oldee.
Sister	Ishig.	To swim	Soo dooshelee.
Eye	Gooz.	To fly	Yooz up kedelee.
Nose	Boorum.	Wool	Yoon.
Teeth	Deesh.	Cotton	Puktu.
Mouth	Ughz.	Sickness	Khastu.
Beard	Sukal.	Near	Yukeen.
Hair	Such.	Afar	Oozak.
Foot	Eyak.	Hunger	Ach.
Hand	Ill.	Blood	Kan.
Knee	Deez.	Smell	Ees.
White	Ak.	One	Bir.
Black	Kara.	Two	Ikee.
Red	Saree.	Three	Ooch.
Ice	Booz.	Four	Toort.

Five	Bush.	Ten	Ool.
Six.	Altee.	Twenty	Eegurne.
Seven	Yedee.	Fifty	Illee.
Eight	Sikkus.	Hundred	Yooz.
Nine	Daghuz.	Thousand	Meeng.

The above words are given by Burnes. The following are words and expressions quoted by various travellers, some being Persian and the rest Toorkee:—

Caleeoon	A pipe.	Eeshan	A priest.
Kala	A fort.	Sardar	A foray leader.
Cheshma	A spring.		
Joszka	A barrow.	Kervanbashi	Caravan leader.
Kizil	Red.		
Cameeze	A shirt.	Numud	A carpet.
Zeerjamas	Trousers.	Chaal	Camel's buttermilk.
Ulkhaulik	Vest.		
Jubba	A cloak.	Mushk	A waterskin.
Aladya / Tchatma	A tent (Yomood).	Auftaba	A long-necked waterbottle.
Bakshi	A troubadour.		
		Su	Water.
Joal	A luggage sack.	Koomiss	Mares' milk fermented.
Urus	A Russian.	Khosh geldin	You are welcome.
Ferenghi	A foreigner not a Russian.	Allah yarin	God be with you.
Alaman	Predatory expedition.	Aman bol	Farewell.
		Getmeh	Don't go.
Tchapao	A raid or surprise.		

Hadji. A title conferred on one who has made a great pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prophet at Mecca.

Khodja. A descendant of the prophets.

Baba Jan (father's soul). A title given by Turcomans to their eldest sons as a term of endearment.

Sunies and Shiites, Sunnites and Shiahs. "The Sunies (Turks, Turcomans, and Turkestanis) hold that Oman, Osmar, and Abubekr were the lawful successors of Mohomed. The Shiites (Persians) assert that they were usurpers and that Ali, his son-in-law, was the next in succession. Bitter hatred exists between the two sects."—Morier.

Sofi. An Ascetic. Conolly says: "One who says prayers often and does not smoke, the Turcomans call a Sooffee." Vámbéry states that Sofi Islam is a sect which originated about thirty years ago. Its founder, a Tadjik from Balkh, was desirous of opposing the ever-increasing influence of the Nakisbendi. In this fraternity prevails the principle of communism and blood relationship. The Sofi Islamists wear a cap trimmed with fur and are more frequently met with this side of the Oxus, as far as Herat, and also among the Turcomans."

Aoul. An encampment. "It does not correspond with our idea of a number of continuous houses, but a district where the people belonging to one aoul encamp and dwell in a scattered manner about their meadows and lands."—Vámbéry.

Saksaoul. "*Haloxylon ammodendron.* Is of a very close fibre, full of knots, and most difficult to be sawn or split, and breaks into very crooked and unmanageable pieces."—Schuyler.

Juwaree or Djügeri (*holcus sorghum*). "Is grown and consumed in large quantities in Central Asia. It is eaten in a milky state, but when dry, it is used as fodder, principally for young colts, being less heating and also more nourishing than barley, from the quantity of saccharine matter it contains. Bread is made of it, either alone or mixed with wheat. Mekke djürgeri (Turkish wheat) never grows higher than a small span's length. Two kinds of it are found, one with a yellowish, the other with a red, small grain. It is never dried, and always either eaten in its milky state or used as fodder."—Vámbéry. Petroosevitch translates "Djoogari," as "*holcus spicatus, i.e.* millet." Burnes says that it has a "stalk thicker than a walking-stick." "In Akhal it grows 12 feet high."—Arsky. It is now being introduced into Russia.

Saman. "Barley straw, chopped into pieces 2 inches long, and given to horses instead of hay: 15 to 20 lbs. suffices for an ordinary horse. Saman replaces hay all over the north of Persia, the Caucasus, and Asia Minor."—O'Donovan.

Cooppook. Whipped camel's milk, a thick and pleasantly acid drink.

Takir. A clayey patch in the sandy desert.

Kouzzouk. A root like a radish, but very sweet, which is found in the desert, and which the Turcomans dry in the sun and eat as a dainty.

Kooroot. Is made of curds slightly salted rolled up into balls, and dried, which keep for a long time, and is used both at home and on the road by all classes; this, broken up in a bowl of milk or water, and eaten with the usual *nan*, or flat cake, and *rognee*, or fat, is far from bad.

Oba. "A settlement, even if it consists only of one kibitka. This is proved by the fact that the Tekkes, in speaking of a number of families gathered together in one spot, use the word in its plural sense—obliar."—Petroosevitch.

CENTRAL ASIAN CURRENCY.

20 shaie (copper)	=	1 kran.
10 krans (silver)	=	1 tooman, tilla, or ashurfee.
1 Persian tooman (gold)	=	8s. 9d.
1 Afghan tilla ,,	=	10s.
1 Bokharan tilla	=	13s.

Vámbéry remarks that the tilla of Bokhara is one of the purest of gold coins. The tilla of Khiva is very inferior in purity and value.

24 Bokharan tenghes . .	}	= £1.
40 Khivan ,, . .	}	

DISTANCES.

A Persian farsakh	4 or 5 miles, varying according to the locality.
A Kurdish agatch	7½ miles.
A Russian verst .	¾ mile.

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Colonel Grodekoff's Ride from Samarcand to Herat through the Uzbek States of Afghan Turkestan. By Charles Marvin, 1880.

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Besides the leading works on Central Asia (for a list of which see Hutton's *Central Asia*), the recent Blue Books, the *Turkestan Gazette*, and the principal Russian newspapers and reviews since 1875.

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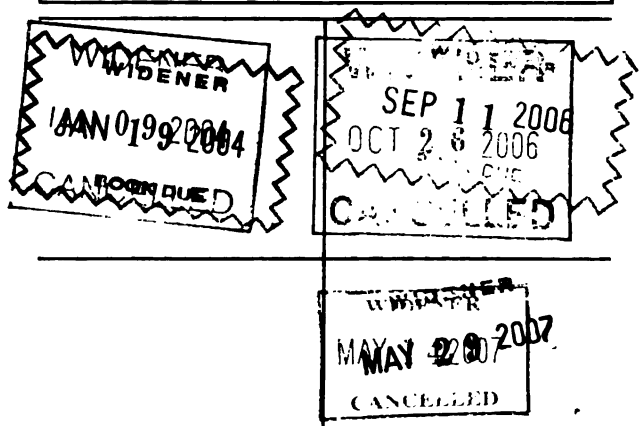

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